

CHAUCER
PRIORESS'S TALE

DRENNAN

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CHAUCER PRIORESS'S TALE

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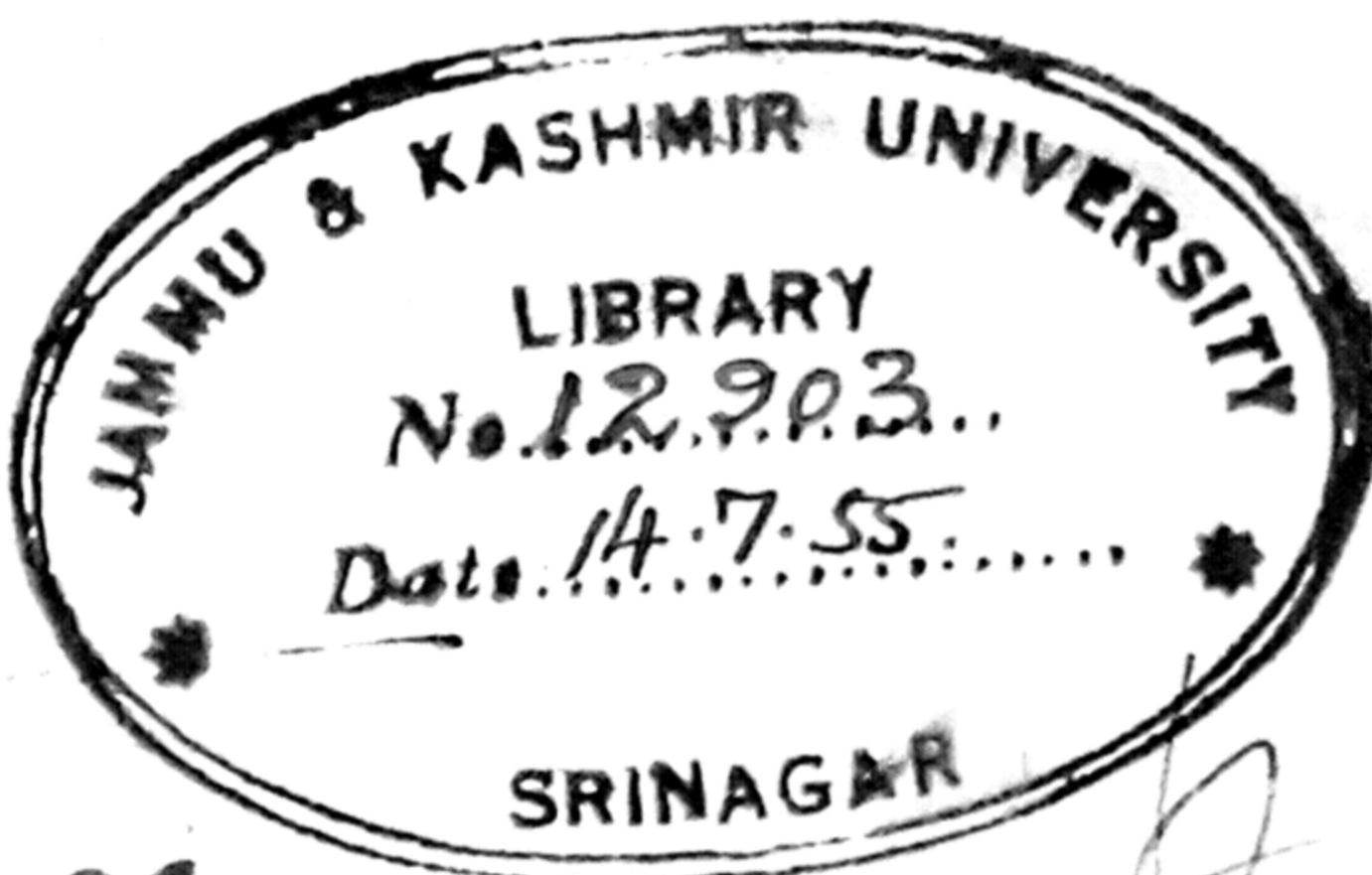
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INTRODUCTION.

1. Chaucer's Life and Works.

THE surname *Chaucer* is found in the earlier forms *Le Chaucier*, *Le Chaucer*, "The hosier," from the same root as modern Fr. *chausse*; or possibly it is the same name as *Le Chaufecire*, the latter being Anglo-Norman for the hybrid "chaffwax" or

A.D. "chafewax" (see the *New English Dictionary*, s.v.).

1337. Hundred Years' War began.
1338. John Chaucer, citizen and vintner of London, attended the king and queen to Flanders and Cologne.
1339 Geoffrey Chaucer, son of John and Agnes Chaucer, (about). born. The old date for Chaucer's birth, 1328, has been proved to be impossible, but the exact year cannot be fixed : 1339 suits all the circumstances as well as any. See 1386.
1346. Battle of Crecy.
1347. Siege of Calais.
1349. The Black Death.
1356. Battle of Poitiers.
1357. Chaucer in the service of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, and of his wife the Countess of Ulster, both in London and Yorkshire. Geoffrey was certainly well educated, but the statement that he was at Cambridge rested on the lines from *The Court of Love*, now known not to be his :—

"Philogenet I cald am fer and nere,
Of Cambridge clerke."

1359. Chaucer went to France as a soldier with Edward III. and his four sons, and was taken prisoner.

1360. Ransomed two months before the Treaty of Bre-tigny,* the king contributing £16 towards his ransom.
1362. Pleadings in the law courts ordered to be made in English, although still recorded in French until 1730.
1366. Philippa Chaucer received an annual pension of ten marks from the queen, perhaps on the occasion of her marriage : at least we assume that this was Chaucer's wife. Two things are probable : (1) that the Thomas Chaucer who, after an interval of some sixteen years, succeeded Geoffrey as forester of North Petherton Park, was their son ; (2) that Philippa Chaucer's maiden name was Roet, and that she was the sister of Catherine de Roet of Hainault, better known as Catherine Swynford, the third wife of John of Gaunt. Both these probabilities are confirmed by the fact that Thomas Chaucer's arms bore three *wheels* (*roet* = "little wheel"). Further, John of Gaunt's patronage of Chaucer is partly accounted for.
1367. The king granted a pension of twenty marks to "valettus noster" Geoffrey Chaucer.
1368. In an undated list (but probably of this year) of names of those employed in the royal household, Chaucer's name occurs seventeenth of the thirty-seven esquires.
1369. Chaucer, "a squire of less estate," took part in the French campaign. Charles V. of France began to regain the territory of Aquitaine. *Book of the Duchess* (Blanche, first wife of John of Gaunt).
For the next ten years Chaucer was frequently abroad on diplomatic and commercial missions.
1370. Abroad on the king's service, it is not known where.

* By this treaty England retained : (a) Poitou, Saintonge, Limousin, Guienne, Gascony, i.e. the dominions of Eleanor of Guienne, who had married Henry II.; (b) the dowry of Isabella, wife of Edward II.; (c) the districts of Calais and Guisnes.

1372. John of Gaunt granted Philippa Chaucer a yearly pension of £10.
1373. Chaucer and two others went to Genoa to settle a commercial treaty ; he was back by April 28, having also visited Florence. Probably, too, he met Petrarch at Padua, and learnt from him *The Story of Grisilde*, which he afterwards made *The Clerk's Tale*.
1374. The king granted "dilecto Armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer," a pitcher of wine daily—a gift which the poet exchanged four years afterwards for twenty marks yearly. The corporation of London granted Chaucer a lease for life of the dwelling-house over the city-gate of Aldgate, and he resided there until 1385 or 1386. He was appointed Comptroller of the Customs of wool, etc., in the Port of London, "to write the rolls with his own hand, to be continually present," etc. John of Gaunt granted him £10 a year for life, "for the good service he and his wife Philippa" had rendered to the duke, to his consort, and to the duke's mother, the queen. Loss of all France except Calais, Bayonne, and Bordeaux. Cf. *Prologue*, 397 :—

"Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he i-drawe
Fro Burdeux ward."

1376. Chaucer employed on some secret service with Sir J. Burley. John of Gaunt at the head of the administration, till the Good Parliament impeached Latimer and Neville, Alice Perrers, etc. But the Black Prince died, and John of Gaunt returned to power.
1377. Chaucer went on a secret mission to Flanders with Sir T. Percy (afterwards Earl of Worcester). Later, he was engaged in a mission to France for negotiating a peace : although Chaucer's name is not in the commission, he must have belonged to it, for he is mentioned by both Froissart and Stow,

and received letters of protection and payment for his services. On May 31st Chaucer received payment of an annuity of twenty marks granted to him that day, and of an annuity for life of ten marks for Philippa Chaucer. Wyclif cited to appear at St. Paul's.

- 1378. Chaucer went with others to France to negotiate a marriage between Richard II. and a daughter of the French king. Later in the year, he paid his second visit to Italy, going to Lombardy with Sir E. Berkeley, to treat with Barnabo Visconti, Duke of Milan (see *The Monk's Tale*, B. 3589-96). Chaucer named John Gower one of his two attorneys, or representatives, during his absence.
- 1379. *About this time terminated the first period of Chaucer's authorship, commonly called his French period, in which he was chiefly a "graunt translateur."* In it only two works can be dated with any certainty; see 1369 and 1373. To it belong also a number of lost works, as well as the following: "The Romaunt of the Rose" (ll. 1—1705, the first of three extant fragments, are almost certainly Chaucer's, but no more); "A B C"; "Life of Saint Cecyle" ("Second Nun's Tale"); "Complaint to Pity"; "Story of Constance" ("Man of Law's Tale"); "Twelve Tragedies" (in "The Monk's Tale"); "Complaint of Mars."
- 1380. Cecilia Chaumpaigne released Chaucer from all claims "de raptu meo"—an unexplained matter.
- 1381. Rising of the people under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw. Cf. *Nun's Priest's Tale*, B. 4584:—
 "Certes he, Iakke Straw, and his meynee
 Ne made never shoutes half so shrille,
 Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille."
- 1382. Chaucer appointed Comptroller of Petty Customs in the Port of London, with leave to discharge his duties by deputy. *Parliament of Fowls*.
- 1384. *House of Fame* (certainly written about this time).

1385. English taught in schools (Trevisa). Chaucer allowed, very likely through the queen's intercession, to appoint a permanent deputy as Comptroller of the Customs of wool. It fits in well with the circumstances to suppose that Chaucer took advantage of his liberty to make a pilgrimage to Canterbury this year, and that he was thinking of this pilgrimage when, shortly afterwards, he planned *The Canterbury Tales. Legend of Good Women.*

With this year Chaucer's second, so-called Italian, period of authorship may be said to close. Besides the poems named in 1382, 1384, and 1385, it contained the following works, which it is not possible to date exactly : "Complaint to his Lady"; "Anelida and Arcyte"; "Translation of Boethius"; "Troilus and Cressida"; "To Adam the Scrivener"; "To Rosamond."

1386. Chaucer elected a knight of the shire for Kent. Possibly he had already gone to live at Greenwich (see *Envoy to Scogan*, 45), a most favourable spot for watching pilgrims going to Canterbury. At the end of this year he was deprived of his comptrollerships. John of Gaunt had gone abroad in May, and the Duke of Gloucester had seized the supreme power. In November, Richard, aged twenty, was forced to appoint a commission to inquire into abuses; there was great dissatisfaction with the Customs department, and Chaucer, amongst others, was deprived, and left with his pensions alone.

In the same year, in the trial of Scrope v. Grosvenor, in which Chaucer was a witness, he is described as "del age de xl ans et plus, armeez par xxvii ans" (of the age of *forty and upwards, armed for twenty-seven years*). This statement, though vague, seems to imply that Chaucer was not yet fifty. The supposition that he was forty-seven (adopted throughout this table) would make him eighteen in 1357, when he was in the Countess of

- Ulster's service, and twenty in 1359, when he first bore arms—conclusions that cannot well miss the mark by more than a year or so.
1387. Chaucer's wife died ; her pension was regularly paid up to June and there is no further trace of her.
1388. Chaucer seems to have been in distress at this time, for he sold his two pensions of twenty marks each. There can be little doubt that he used his enforced leisure of the last two years in writing the greater part of *The Canterbury Tales*.
1389. While John of Gaunt was away in Spain (cf. *Monk's Tale*, B. 3560-80), Richard took the government into his own hands, and ruled fairly well for eight years. Chaucer, in consequence, received the appointment of Clerk of the King's Works, and was allowed to perform his duties by deputy.
1390. In the above capacity Chaucer was ordered to have St. George's Chapel, Windsor, repaired. He was robbed of the king's money twice in the same day by the same gang of robbers. About this time he was made forester of North Petherton Park, in Somerset, by Duke Lionel's grandson, the Earl of March (see 1366).
1391. Chaucer lost his appointment as Clerk of the Works, but the reason is unknown. Henceforward until the accession of Henry IV. he seems to have been in pecuniary difficulties. *Treatise on the Astrolabe*.
1393. *Envoy to Scogan*.
1394. Richard II. granted Chaucer £20 a year for life.
1395. Among other loans, Chaucer on one occasion borrowed as small a sum as £1 6s. 8d., whence it is inferred that he was in dire pecuniary embarrassment.
1396. Richard II. married Isabella of France ; truce made with France for twenty-five years. *Envoy to Bukton*.
1397. Richard attacked the Lords Appellant in Parliament ; put one, Arundel, to death ; banished and imprisoned others.

1398. Chaucer applied to the Exchequer in person, on two separate occasions, for an advance of 6s. 8d. In response to a petition to the king he was granted a tun of wine annually for life. The Parliament of Shrewsbury deferred abjectly to the king, who became virtually absolute and ruled arbitrarily. Hereford banished.
1399. John of Gaunt died, and Richard seized his estates. Richard went to Ireland, and Hereford, now Duke of Lancaster, landed at Ravenspur, and was joined by the Percies and by the regent, the Duke of York. Richard returned, surrendered, was imprisoned, and resigned the crown. Parliament met, accepted the resignation, and, after hearing the articles of accusation, deposed Richard on September 30th. *Complaint to his Purse*, with an *Envoy* addressed to the new king. On October 3rd, three days after Henry's accession, he granted Chaucer forty marks a year, in addition to his pension of £20. Chaucer took the lease of a house near the present site of Henry VII.'s Chapel, Westminster, for a term of fifty-three years, *i.e.* for life.
1400. In February Chaucer received one of his pensions; in June someone received a payment for him, and this is the last notice we have. The stone in Westminster Abbey, which dates from 1556 but was possibly copied from an earlier stone, states that he died October 25th, 1400.
1401. Act "de heretico comburendo," and first execution for Lollard heresy.

Autobiographical passages in Chaucer's works are:—

- (a) *The description of his person in the Prologue to "Sir Thopas,"* B. 1883-94.
- (b) *The description of his habits, etc., in "The House of Fame,"* 574-660, and in the *Prologue to "The Legend of Good Women,"* 29-39.

(c) *The lists of his works in the Prologue to "The Legend,"* 417-41 (405-31 A. text); *"The Man of Law's Head-link,"* B. 47-89; and the *"Preces de Chaucer"* at the close of *"The Parson's Tale,"* I. 1085-7.

His Christian name Geoffrey occurs in *"The House of Fame,"* 729, and his surname in *"The Canterbury Tales,"* B. 47.

2. The Debt of English Literature to Chaucer.

The great classical writers of antiquity are, it has been well said, much nearer to us moderns than are the men of the Middle Ages. We read page after page, book after book, written by medieval writers of all countries; and only in odd lines, in rare flashes here and there, are we reminded that the people who write, or the people they describe, are of the same flesh and blood as we are ourselves. They all seem to us, like the drawings, like the figures and scenes in the stained-glass windows they have left us, hopelessly unreal, ghosts moving in a world of ghosts, shades of the shadows of dreams. Everything is stiff and angular, everything appears out of focus, out of perspective.

Then comes Geoffrey Chaucer and takes us by the hand, and everything changes as if by magic. We feel once more on solid ground; what we thought to be ghosts are at once seen to be substantial citizens and their wives; knights and squires; real flesh and blood saints and sinners; preachers who only preach and preachers who practise; shop-keepers who sell real things over real counters; a prioress who intones her Latin through her nose; that fat wife of Bath, as little like an allegory as her great descendant Falstaff himself; in short, the same old people we have known all our lives, living, breathing, sweating humanity.

This then is the first and greatest thing Chaucer has done for us. Christopher Columbus, some people think, discovered the New World for us; Chaucer did much more, something much less obvious—he discovered the

Old. Keats would have done better had he written in honour of Chaucer—

“ Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.”

Chaucer is thus our first great writer in modern English whose works breathe humanity ; the only writer who makes a universal appeal (and this is the supreme touchstone of an artist's greatness) until we reach Shakespeare, who eclipses him.

Chaucer is above all a humorist, the first of a very long line of writers of that kind of humour in which English-speaking nations have excelled, a genial, all-pervading kindly humour, which like our Northern sunshine irradiates all objects but neither blisters nor scorches.

Perhaps no one ever told a tale much better than Chaucer, certainly not in verse. To read Crabbe's tales in verse (good as Crabbe is) after reading Chaucer is almost to leap back again into the Dark Ages. Browning has told tales in verse, but he is medieval where Chaucer is modern, prolix where Chaucer is restrained ; Chaucer never forgets or lets us forget that he is a poet ; Browning on the other hand, when he tells a tale, does sometimes forget that a bard must sing. Chaucer, finally, writes English, the King's English ; he comes down to our level and speaks a speech understood of the people ; Browning, great psychologist as he is, at his best is rarely clear, at his worst writes a jargon of his own.

Chaucer, as has been said, never forgets he is a poet. In many single lines and in a few passages he even attains a Dantean grandeur of diction, as witness his famous description of the “ Temple of Mars in Thrace.”

“ And downward from an hill under a bent
There stood the temple of Mars Armpotent,
Wrought all of burnèd steel, of which th' entree
Was long and strait, and ghastly for to see,
And there out came a rage and such a veze¹
That it made all the gates for to rese.²

¹ rush.

² shake.

The northern light in at the doorës shone
 For window on the wall ne was there none
 Through which men mighten any light discern :
 The doors were all of adamant etern."

(*Knight's Tale*, 1981 *foll.*)

Dante would not have been ashamed of such lines as these, and the last of them is on a level with the great Italian master's best. So is Chaucer's famous line describing an assassin: "The smiler, with the knife under the cloak." So are many others.

Even where Chaucer is translating closely, he rarely falls below his own high poetic standard. Take his "Invocation to Mary" in the Proem of the Second Nun's Tale, beginning:—

"Thou maid and mother, daughter of thy Son,
 Thou well of mercy, sinful soulës cure!" etc.

Although we know that it is a translation we never recognise the fact, so well has Chaucer made the spirit of the original his own.

It is only when we read Chaucer's prose that we fully realise the miracle that such poetry as his should blossom in the age in which it did; and yet his prose is excellent prose for its day.

The debt of English literature, therefore, to Chaucer is incalculable whether we consider him as poet, story-teller, humorist, or painter of our common humanity. In each department he is our greatest pioneer, so that Tennyson did not exaggerate when he called him

"The morning star of song, who made
 His music heard below ;
 Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
 Preluded those melodious bursts, that fill
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth
 With sounds that echo still."

English poets, who after all are the best judges to decide upon the merits of their peers, have long given their decision, and Tennyson has but summed up their verdict. Witness Hoccleve,

"O master dear and father reverent,
 My master Chaucer, flower of eloquence!"

And Drayton,

"He was the first of ours that ever brake
Into the Muses' treasure, and first spake
In weighty numbers delving in the mine
Of perfect knowledge, which he could refine
And win for current."

Spenser, with more knowledge and more poetry, wrote—

"Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled,
On Fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be filed."

And Dryden,

"He is the father of English poetry"; "Chaucer followed Nature everywhere"; "'Tis sufficient to say according to the proverb, that 'Here is God's Plenty.'"

And, from across the Atlantic, speaks the voice of the highest American culture in his and Chaucer's common heritage of language, the voice of Longfellow :—

"He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song; and as I read,
I hear the crowing cock; I hear the note
Of lark and linnet; and from every page
Rise odours of ploughed field, or flowery mead."

3. Chaucer's Prioress.

The beautiful illuminations in the Ellesmere MS. of the *Canterbury Tales* give us a fifteenth-century attempt to represent pictorially Chaucer's pilgrims from Chaucer's own descriptions. The Prioress is represented in the habit of the order of Benedictine nuns, with wimple "ful semly pynched," with a "ful fetys" black cloak over a white tunic, and wearing a pair of beads on her left arm. Her right hand is raised as if to call attention to the story she is about to tell; she is represented as riding side-saddle, contrariwise to the Wife of Bath. This appears to be wrong, as Jusserand notices: "The custom of riding sideways did not spread in England before the latter

part of the fourteenth century and even then it was not general."¹

It would take a clever limner, however, to do justice to the gentle-hearted, somewhat finical lady with the glass-grey eyes, the long straight nose, the small mouth soft and red, the fair forehead a span broad, with whom Chaucer makes us acquainted. The Ellesmere illuminator is not however clever enough for this, although it is open to question whether his failure is any greater than those of his modern brethren who have made similar attempts with brush and pencil. Chaucer in one way presents a very difficult task to the painter; his outlines are such clear black and white, so well defined, that his illustrators can merely attempt to copy him lamely; if they visualise their own ideas, they are lost. At all events no painter could do justice to:—

“That of her smiling was full simple and coy,
Her greatest oath was but by Seintē Loy,
And she was clepēd Madame Eglantine,
Full well she sang the servicē divine,
Entunēd in her nose full semēly.”

She appears to have been a fashionable prioress of the day, educated at the important Benedictine convent of Stratford-le-Bow, close to London; thus she lived near the Court and was in touch with the ladies of the Court.

People swore pretty strongly in Chaucer's day, even ladies, but the prioress at her angriest did no more than invoke the aid of St. Eligius. She was tender-hearted, not to the poor, or to lazars or *swiche poraille*—or at least we are not told so, and the satire lies in the omission—but to her little dogs. She fed them with roast flesh or milk or bread of the finest flour, although as always there was terrible poverty in the land. A dead mouse would make her weep, but she would weep bitterly if one of her pampered pets was struck smartly with a stick.

“And al was conscience and tendre herte.”

As a fashionable prioress and perhaps head of a young ladies' boarding-school, she was very strong on etiquette.

¹ *English Waysfaring Life.* Trans. by L. T. Smith, p. 104.

Her table manners were perfect. She never dropped grease on her clothes, and left none on her glass after drinking. After she had finished eating she "raughte" full "semely" (with her hand to her mouth we may suppose).

As a Prioress she may have been of noble birth ; more probably not, however, as she

".... peyned hire to countrefete cheere
Of Court and had been estatlich of manere."

A lady of birth would not have had to take such pains.

How lovingly Chaucer lingers over her portrait ! It is not unkind either ; Chaucer is gallant with a lady (contrast his treatment of the Friar) and only hints her faults. She is a good kind-hearted woman, we feel sure ; conventionally pious, a thought perhaps too fond of the world. "Madame Eglentyne," to quote Miss Eileen Power, "was not quite as simple and coy as she looked. How many of the literary critics, who chuckle over her, know that she never ought to have got into the Prologue at all. The Church was quite clear in its mind that pilgrimages for nuns were to be discouraged." The Monk ("a manly man to been an Abbot able") is her masculine counterpart. Nothing definitely bad is said of either of them, you will notice. Love of hunting in itself is no more vicious than is mild ostentation in dress, but they are unexpected traits to be selected in depicting the character of a man or woman who has professed to "have left all" to follow the Higher Way.

Our author lingers, then, over his portrait of the Prioress just as he accentuates and emphasises the whole group of his ecclesiastics. There are about 680 lines of the Prologue devoted to character-drawing, apart from the framework, and of these it is noteworthy that almost half (320 lines to be accurate) are bestowed upon Church folk. While the Knight and his retinue are dismissed in 75 lines, Chaucer assigns 62 lines to his Friar, 52 to his Parson, and to the Prioress, Monk, Pardoner, and Summoner between 40 and 50 lines each. The reason for this is plain : the ecclesiastics form the most picturesque group of the pilgrims ; their vocation gives more scope, while it

adds more piquancy to the pen of the satirist; last but foremost, they were in Chaucer's day the most important group. The Church was then, what it is not to-day, the most powerful estate of the realm; and Chaucer, as a true painter of his age, shows always a just artistic sense of proportion.

4. The Suitability of the Tale to the Narrator.

Chaucer could not have made a better selection than this pretty and pious story to put into the mouth of such a pretty and pious lady. All his stories do not suit their narrators equally well. The beautiful story of Constance, for example, does not sound natural coming as it does from the mouth of the crafty Sergeant of the Law, more skilled surely

“in termes and doomes alle
That from the tyme of Kyng William were falle,”

than in pious legends of holy women. This unsuitability may be ascribed to the author's never having revised his work—for Chaucer rarely makes such mistakes in artistry—rather than (with Brandl) to an attempt at satire.

Brandl,¹ who sees satire where no one else has been able to detect it, finds it even in the *Prioreess's Tale*, which he styles a skit on puerile legends (“*Verspottung Kindischer Legenden*”). Such a view hardly needs refutation, as the most cursory reading ought to be enough to prove.

From the point of view of mediaeval faith and practice no story could have been more in keeping with the character of the Prioreess as sketched by Chaucer than this simple, childlike (rather than childish) story of an involuntary child martyr. It is just what the people of the day loved to hear and to relate and, as we shall see when we come to consider the Analogues, such stories were common and popular. Just as popular, too, was the devotion to Saint Hugh of Lincoln and Saint William of Norwich.

Equally suitable, also, both to audience and narrator,

¹ Paul's *Grundriss*, II. 680.

are those parts of the story which grate most upon modern ears. The bigotry against Jews and the Jewish religion, for example, was not, one must regret to admit, confined to illiterate, ignorant, or fanatical Christians. Although many mediaeval Popes and Bishops were amongst the staunchest protectors of the Hebrew race, many of their subjects, both high and low, were relentless Jew-baiters, and no crime was considered too bad to be laid at the door of the Jews. It was mainly to protect this ancient race from the fanaticism of ignorant Christian mobs that Jewries were founded in various cities throughout Europe.

In the present story there is luckily no reference to "ritual murder."¹ Such a charge, indeed, was not uncommon then and is not unknown to-day, although even a Russian policeman can hardly pretend to believe it. The little boy is murdered by an assassin hired by Jews, not for the sake of his blood but because they are led by Satan to believe that their law was being insulted. The average Christian of the Middle Ages knew little and cared less about an alien religion, whether of Moses or of Mahomet. He knew the first must be vile because the Jews had crucified Christ, who, he rarely stayed to consider, was Himself a circumcised Jew who kept the Law of Moses. The second, a pure monotheism, he considered an idolatrous polytheism, and hated as the creed of a war-like people, who were not only a living menace to Christendom but the profane possessors of the Redeemer's tomb. There is no evidence to show that even the tolerant good-humoured Chaucer was above his age in this respect. He may have been of course, but his Prioress was much less likely to be; and so her fierceness against Jews is eminently in keeping with what Chaucer knew of his own age.

¹ I.e. the incredibly stupid myth that Jews required for the ritual of their worship the blood of a Christian child. Such stories have been spread from time to time even in our day (e.g. the trial at Kieff in 1913) in order to give some countenance to the persecution and pillage of Jews. The same accusation against Christians was made under the pagan Roman Empire, and is still brought by Chinese in our own day.

The little touches of tenderness and pity throughout the story, the outburst in honour of celibacy (1769 *et seq.*), the sympathy breathing through the account of the poor mother's sufferings (1776 *et seq.*) are accentuated and, at the same time, rendered more probable when put into the mouth of a refined sensitive lady, herself vowed to virginity. Of this we may be sure Chaucer was as conscious as we, and twice in the story (1644, 1771) he emphasises the point that a woman is the narrator.

It is all part and parcel of the wonderful craft of a master who rarely draws a line too much or too little.

How much a great poet loses by translation, even by modernisation, may be seen by comparing Wordsworth's version of *The Prioress's Tale* (*Oxford Wordsworth*, p. 552) with the original. Take Wordsworth's tenth stanza for example :—

“ This little child while in the school he sate,
His Primer conning with an earnest cheer,
The while the rest their anthem-book repeat,
The *Alma Redemptoris* did he hear ;
And as he durst he drew him near and near,
And hearkened to the words and to the note,
Till the first verse he learned it all by rote.”

“ With an earnest cheer ” is Wordsworth's own ; “ near and near ” is a mistranslation ; there is a vicious rhyme, and the last line is pure Wordsworthian doggerel. Now turn to lines 1706-12, and, reading them aloud, admire the consummate ease of one who was a master of English verse.

5. Date and Analogues.

As to the exact date and definite source or sources of the *Prioress's Tale* we have no information. It was long held that this tale, being written in stanzas, was an early work which had been revised by Chaucer for the purpose of including it in the *Canterbury Tales*. This view, however, no longer obtains. There is not the slightest trace of immaturity in the style or manner of the poem.

The story is admirably adapted to the personage in whose mouth it is placed, and is told with that apparent absence

of art which is the perfection of art. The manner is entirely Chaucer's later manner, and in addition the two instances of "quod she" (lines 1644, 1771) seem conclusively to prove that the tale was written expressly for the place which it at present occupies, and was not a mere revision of an earlier work.

Critics are agreed in assigning the composition of the *Canterbury Tales* to some time in the interval between 1385 and 1400, the date of Chaucer's death. It follows, then, that the *Prioress's Tale* belongs to this period, and we cannot be far wrong in placing it in the years 1386-90. Nearer than that it is impossible for us to go.

While no direct source has as yet been found for the tale, we have many analogues, as many as fifteen being given by the latest writer on the subject.¹

The Latin life of St. William of Norwich (edited by Jessopp and James; Cambridge University Press) seems to be the prototype, so far as England is concerned, of legends about Christian children martyred by Jews, either in hatred of Christianity, or for purposes of Jewish ritual.

Dr. James, in chapter 6 of the Cambridge edition, says: "On what scale is the enormous subject of the alleged murders of Christian children by Jews to be treated in this Introduction? It was possible for Adrian Kembter, a Praemonstratensian of Wilthin, writing in 1745, to enumerate 52 instances of these supposed crimes, and his last is dated in 1650. A systematic investigation would bring to light perhaps double the number. . . .

"It has long been held, and I think rightly, that the earliest occurrence of child-murder by Jews in literature is in a passage of the fifth-century Church historian, Socrates" (VII. 16, in reference to events about A.D. 415).

This, however, does not appear to be a case of ritual murder, but probably of rough horse-play ending in death.

The story of St. William of Norwich (c. 1144), as told about 1172 by Thomas of Monmouth, is the case of

¹ C. F. Brown: Publications of the Modern Languages Association, 21. N. 486.

crucifixion of a twelve-year old boy by some Norwich Jews in hatred of Christianity. There are several similarities between it and Chaucer's story : e.g. the sorrowing mother and her going distractedly through the streets ; the single Jew who is at first responsible ; the privy (l. 1578), etc., but in hagiography a "pious lie" gets copied from legend into legend, as the present degraded meaning of the word "legend" attests.

The dissimilarities are, however, far greater. In the case of St. William there is a suspicion of ritual murder, as the hagiographer states that he was crucified on the Feast of the Passover. There is no mention of his singing powers or of the hymn to Our Lady, while the discovery of the body is due not to the miraculous singing but to a miraculous light.

The Chaucer Society has published perhaps the three closest analogues of the *Prioress's Tale* (Chaucer Society : *Origins and Analogues*, pp. 107, 251, 273). The first is the Legend of Alphonsus of Lincoln. Here, as in the case of St. Hugh (line 1874), the scene of the martyrdom is the well-known Jewry at Lincoln, and not "in Asie, in a greet citee" (1678). Alphonsus is ten and not "seven yeer of age" (1693). But we have the school ; the *Alma Redemptoris* ; the throwing into a pit ; the visit of the Virgin and the miraculous singing ; the search of the mother ; and "the tomb of marbul stones clere" (1871). Instead of the "greyn" (1852), which seems original with Chaucer, we have a ruby, while the local bishop takes the place of the Abbot in our story.

The second analogue, taken from a collection of Gautier de Coinci's (1177-1236), *Miracles of Our Lady*, is entitled "*C'est d'un clerc que li juif tuerent qui chantoit Gaude Maria*" (Harleian MS. 4401). Here the anthem is the *Gaude Maria*. The scene is laid in England, the exact place not stated. *La mere deu* (the mother of God) herself aids the "clergeoun" (*le clerconcel*) to learn, when his widowed mother sends him to school. He sings so beautifully that he has alms given him with which he maintains his poor mother.

We again meet with the single murderer ; the distracted

mother's search through the Jewish quarter ; the miraculous singing ; and rough justice upon the Jews. This analogue ends, however, in a somewhat humorous vein. After inculcating the moral that we should honour the Mother of God and burn tapers before her shrine, de Coinci proceeds to satirise a priest of his acquaintance, who has " eight or nine fine candles in his bed-chamber, while he burns in church a sorry taper as thin as a fly's foot."

In the third analogue, "*The Paris Beggar-boy murdered by a Jew*" (Vernon MS. Bodleian, circ. 1375 A.D.), we have again the *Alma Redemptoris*; the single Jew; the privy; the miraculous singing; the mother's search; and the funeral at which the bishop presided. In this case the poor beggar-boy kept both his parents by his beautiful singing. There is no mention of "the greyn"; but the bishop found in the child's throat,

"A lylie flour so briht and cler
So feir a lylie nas nevere seghen er,
With guldene lettres everi wher;
Alma Redemptoris Mater."

An additional miracle is related :—

"Into the Munstre whan thei kam,
Bigonne the Masse of Requiem,
As for the dede, men is wont
But thus sone thei weren i-stunt,
The cors aros in heore presens,
Bigan then Salve, sancta parens."—

The corpse arose and sang another hymn.

This is an interesting and pretty little story told feelingly; additionally interesting to us because it is in English, so that no apologies are needed for quoting the few lines above.

All the known analogues, excepting *The Prioress's Tale*, *Alphonsus of Lincoln*, and *The Paris Beggar-boy*, agree in having a "happy ending," i.e. the boy is actually brought to life by the Blessed Virgin and restored to his widowed mother. The two latter differ from Chaucer's version (line 1840) in the further miracle of a corpse's singing. All agree, too, in the placing of some miraculous object, "greyn," ruby, or flower, by the Virgin in the lad's throat. C. F. Brown

(cited above) is of opinion that the "happy ending" represents the oldest version of the story.

We see, then, that Chaucer had material in plenty for his legend. The cult both of William of Norwich and of Hugh of Lincoln was extremely popular, especially in the eastern part of England, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and from the twelfth century onward there are many child-martyrs with localised cults in places widely spread throughout Europe. One such story Chaucer has borrowed for his purpose, or else he has compiled a tale of his own from the mass of floating legend : from a knowledge of his usual method we are safe perhaps in thinking the former.

The literary sources of other portions of the *Prioreess's Tale* will be indicated in the Notes.

6. The Metre.

The metre of *The Prioreess's Tale* is the iambic decasyllable arranged in Chaucer's favourite seven-line stanza, rhyming a b a b b c c. This metrical arrangement is sometimes called the Ballad Stanza or Rhyme Royal, and consists of a quatrain of alternate rhymes (*Aufgesang*) and a *cauda* (*Abgesang*) in which the fifth line repeats the rhyme of the fourth, and the last two lines are an heroic couplet. Chaucer uses it for the first time in the *Compleynte to Pitee*, and it is the metre of *The Parlement of Foules*, *Troilus*, and of the Tales of The Man of Lawe, Clerk of Oxford, and Second Nun. In the strict form there should be a break in sense between the *Aufgesang* and the *Abgesang*, but Chaucer's soul is too free to pay much attention to metrical or any other pedantry.

Some authorities claim this stanza as an invention of Chaucer's. This is not accurate, as he had models in Old French poetry, but he made the stanza his own, and achieved results beyond the reach of his masters. So far he may be called the creator of Rhyme Royal.

Chaucer, like all our great artists in metre, has refused to be clogged by the close shackles of French metrics, and

in consequence his story has much of the ease and freedom from monotony which are associated with good prose. While the normal scheme of his line is

$\times / | \times / | \times / | \times / | \times / | (\times)$

$\overset{x}{\text{My}}$ kón | $\overset{x}{\text{neyng}}$ ís | $\overset{x}{\text{so}}$ wáyk | $\overset{x}{\text{O}}$ blís | $\overset{x}{\text{ful}}$ qué | $\overset{x}{\text{ne}}$

he secures that variety which is the spice of life in poetry

- (1) By the omission of a short syllable, especially the first—

Quód | the spér | hauk né | ver mó̄t | shé thée | (*Parl. of Foules*, 569).

- (2) By varying the stress, especially in the first foot—

×

Lády | thy bouún | tee thy | magní | fícen | ce (1664)

- (3) By dropping the extra-metrical light syllable at the end—

Thus háth | this wíd | w(e) hir lít | el són(e) | ytaught (1669),

- (4) By the intermingling of Masculine (or Single) with Feminine (or Double) rhymes; cp. the endings of lines 1699-1705—*ytaught*, *dere*, *naught*, *lere*, *matere*, *presence*, *reverence*; the masculine lines are italicised.

- (5) By letting the sense run on from line to line, or even by breaking the line in the middle; and, above all, by constantly shifting the caesural pause, as in the following lines (in which || indicates the pause)—

A lít | el scóle | of Críst | en fólk || ther stóod

Dóun at | the fér | ther énde || in which | there wér | e

Chíldren | an héep || yéomen | of Críst | en blood |

10. A Brief Sketch of Chaucer's Accidence.

I. Nouns.

The following are examples of the declension of nouns in Chaucer:—

(a) O.E. Masculines and Neuters (strong and weak).

	Singular.	Plural.
<i>Nom. Acc.</i>	cherl, day, ende, word, wyf	-es, -s
<i>Gen.</i>	-es, -s,	wyves
<i>Dat.</i>	as nom. (though when nom. ended in a consonant -e is found)	-es, -s

Note 1.—The plural of some neuter long o- stems remained the same as the singular, e.g. *yeer*, *deer*, *scheep*, *swyn*, *hors*.

Note 2.—Some nouns of the O.E. -n stems retained the -n in the plural, as *yen* (eyes), *shoon*, *ton* (toes), *oxen*, although the plural in -s is also found, as *yes*, etc.

Note 3.—The nominative singular ended in -e where O.E. had a vowel, a, o, or u.

(b) O.E. Feminines (strong and weak).

	Singular.	Plural.
<i>Nom. Acc.</i>	lady, queene, hond	-es, -s
<i>Gen.</i>	-s, -es	-es, -s
<i>Dat.</i>	as nom. (though when nom. ended in a consonant -e is found)	-es, -s

Note 1.—Remnants of O.E. genitives in -e and -an (later modified to -e) occur in a few words: *helle*, *love(-day)*, *lady*, *widwe*.

Note 2.—Some nouns of the O.E. n- stems retained the -n in the plural, as *been* (bees), *pesen* (peas), although the plural in -s is also found, e.g. *bees*.

Note 3. -e is the usual ending of the nominative singular.

Relics of O.E. minor declensions are found in the mutation-plurals *feet*, *men*, *gees*, *breech* (breeches), etc., and in such genitive forms as *fader*, *brother*.

Substantives of Romance origin were usually declined in the same way as those derived from O.E., e.g. *provenance*.

Words ending in *-s* were not inflected, e.g. singular, *vers*; plural, *vers*; nominative, *Venus*; genitive, *Venus*.

II. Adjectives.

Adjectives in Chaucer, as in O.E., had both weak and strong forms. The weak form was used as in O.E. (a) for the nominative of address, (b) after the definite article and demonstrative or possessive adjectives, and (c) often before a proper noun.

Adjectives were declined as follows:—

		Strong.	Weak.
All cases.	Singular.	smal, softe	smale, softe
„ „	Plural.	smale, softe	smale, softe

Adjectives of French origin sometimes retained their own plural, especially when preceded by their noun, as *temporel*, plural *temporels*.

Note.—The older genitive plural of the strong declension survives in *aller* (of all), used in such phrases as *oure aller cok*, “the cock of us all”; *aller* becomes *alder* in compounds, e.g. *alderbest*.

Adjectives were compared much as in modern English, though older forms are found, e.g. *strong*, *strenger*, *strengeſt*.

III. Verbs.

(a) Verbs borrowed from the Romance languages were weak with the exception of *strive* (*stroof*, *striven*).

Weak verbs formed their past tense in *-ed(e)* and their past participle in *ed-*, e.g. *fede*, *fedde*, *fed*. The past participle might have *i-*, *y-* (< O.E. *ge-*) prefixed, e.g. *y-crammed*. The *-d* of the past tense and past participle was changed to *-t* after certain final consonants of the stem, e.g.

bringe(n)	broghte	broght
reche(n)	raughte	raught
drenche(n)	dreinte	dreint
caste(n)	caste	cast

(b) Strong verbs were distinguished as in O.E. by their

gradation. Adopting the classification of Wyatt's *O.E. Grammar* we have :—

	Pres.	Pret. Sing.	Pret. Plur.	Pp.
I.	shīne(n)	shōn	shine(n)	shinen
	smīte(n)	smōt	smite(n)	smiten
II.	crēpe(n)	crēp	crōpe(n)	crōpen
	chēse(n)	chēs	chōsen ¹	chōsen
III.	helpe(n)	halp, holp	holpe(n)	holpen
	drinke(n)	drank, dronk	dronke(n)	drunken, dronken
IV.	bere(n)	bar, bor, beer	bare(n), bōre(n) ¹ , beerēn	bōre(n)
V.	wreken	wrek	wrēke(n)	wreke(n) (wrōken)
VI.	fare(n) ²			fareñ
	shape(n)	shōp	shōpe(n)	shāpen
VII.	take(n)	tōk	tōken	tāken
	slepe(n)	slēp	slēpe(n)	slēpen
	honge(n)	hēng	hēnge(n)	hongen

This class tended to develop weak forms.

Note.—The *-n* of the past participle might be dropped. As in the case of weak verbs *i-*, *y-* (< O.E. *ge-*) might be prefixed to the past participle, e.g. *yslayn*.

(c) The present indicative of both strong and weak verbs was conjugated in the same way. The endings were :—Singular: 1, *-e*; 2, *-est*; 3, *-eth*, *-th*. Plural: 1, 2, 3, *-e(n)*; e.g.

Singular	1. shine
	2. shīnest
	3. shineth
Plural. 1, 2, 3.	shine(n)

The past indicative of strong and weak verbs differed, e.g.

	Strong.	Weak.
Singular.	1. shōn	lovede
	2. shine (shōn)	lovedest
	3. shōn	lovede
Plural. 1, 2, 3.	shine(n)	lovede(n)

¹ Here the vowel of the p.p. was lengthened and invaded the past tense forms.

² Ferde, a weak pret. from *fere(n)*, is used for the past.

The present subjunctive was the same for strong and weak verbs :—

Singular. 1, 2, 3. shine. Plural. 1, 2, 3. shine(n)

The past subjunctive strong and weak had the same endings -e and -en, but the strong past subjunctive was formed from the plural stem of the past indicative.

The imperative singular of weak verbs ended in -e, while strong verbs had the simple root. The plurals of both ended in -e(th). The plural form in -eth was sometimes used for the singular as a deferential mode of address.

The present participle ended in -inge, the -e being usually sounded at the end of lines, but not elsewhere.

The ending of the infinitive was -e(n), and remnants in -ne of the old dative infinitive (Wyatt, *O.E. Grammar*, § 66) are still found.

(d) Anomalous verbs.

Inf.	Pres. Ind.	Past Ind. Sing.	Past Ind. Pl.	Pp.
be(n)	am, art, is be(n), (aren)	was, wer, was	were(n)	be(n)
do(n)	do, pl. don	dide	dide(n)	do(n)
go(n)	go, pl. gon	yede	yede(n)	go(n)
wille(n)	wil (wol), wilt, wil(n) (woln)	wente wolde	wente(n) wolde	wold

(e) Past-Present Verbs, viz. verbs of which the present tense was originally a strong past (Wyatt, *O.E. Gr.*, § 95).

Class.	Inf.	Pres. Ind.	Pres. Plu.	Past Sing.	Past Pl.	Pp.
I.	wite(n)	wōt	wite(n)	wiste	wiste(n)	wist
	owe(n)	owe		oughte	oughte(n)	
III.	conne(n)	can	conne(n)	coude	coude(n)	couth
	dare(n)	dar	dore(n) dare(n)	couthe	couthe(n)	
	(thar)	thar		dorste	dorste(n)	
	impers.	(it be- hoves)		thurfte (it be- hoved)		
IV.	(shal)	shal	shul(e)n shul	sholde	sholde(n)	
V.	(may)	may	mow(e)n	mighte	mighte(n)	
VI.	(moot)	moot	moote(n)	moste	moste(n)	

IV. Pronouns.

(a) Personal. These pronouns were thus declined :—

		Sing.	Pl.	
First person.	<i>Nom.</i>	I(y)	we	
	<i>Acc.</i>	me	us	
	<i>Gen.</i>	min	our(e)	
	<i>Dat.</i>	me	us	
Second person.	<i>Nom.</i>	thou	ye	
	<i>Acc.</i>	thee	yow	
	<i>Gen.</i>	thin	your(e)	
	<i>Dat.</i>	thee	yow	
Third person.	<i>Masc.</i>	Fem.	Neut.	All genders.
	<i>Nom.</i>	he	she	hit they
	<i>Acc.</i>	him	{ her(e) } { hir(e) }	hit hem
	<i>Gen.</i>	his	{ her(e) } { hir(e) }	his her(e) } hir(e) }
	<i>Dat.</i>	him	{ her(e) } { hir(e) }	him hem

(b) Relative. The usual relatives were *which* and *that*. These were used for all genders, singular and plural. The forms *whos* and *whom*, respectively genitive and dative singular and plural of *who*, were used for the genitive and dative of the relative.

(c) Demonstrative and interrogative pronouns. These were much as in modern English. The plural of *that*, however, is “*tho*” (O E. *ðā*).

V. Adverbs.

Adverbs were formed from adjectives by the terminations *-e* and *-ly*, as :—

Adjective.	Adverb.
lyt (little)	lyte
lyght (light)	lyghtly

Romance adjectives added *-ly*, as :—

solempne	solempnely
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The comparative and superlative of the adjective were used for the comparative and superlative of the adverb.

THE PROLOGUE OF THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

*Bihoold the murie wordes of the Hoost to the Shipman and
to the lady Prioresse.*

“ Wel seyd, by *Corpus Dominus!* ” quod our Hoost. 1625

“ Now longe moote thou saille by the cost,
Sire gentil maister, gentil maryneer !

God yeve this monk a thousand last quade yeer !

A ha, felawes, beth ware of swiche a jape,
The monk putte in the mannes hood an ape, 1630

And in his wyves eek, by saint Austin !

Draweth no monkes more unto your in—

But now passe over and lat us seke aboute

Who shal now telle first of al this route

Another tale.” And with that word he sayde, 1635

As curteisly as it had been a mayde:

“ My lady Prioresse, by your leve,

So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,

I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde

A tale next, if so were that ye wolde. 1640

Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady deere ? ”

“ Gladly,” quod she, and seyde as ye shal heere.

Explicit.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

The Prologue of the Prioresses Tale.

Domine, dominus noster.

O Lord our lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large worlde y-sprad—quod she—
For noght oonly thy laude precious
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyngē
Som tyme shewen they thyn heriynge.

1645

Wherfore in laude, as I best kan or may,
Of thee and of the white lily flour,
Which that thee bar, and is a mayde alway,
To telle a storie I wol do my labour.
Nat that I may encresen hir honour,
For she hirself is honour and the rote
Of bountee (next hir sone) and soules bote.

1650

1655

O moder mayde, O mayde moder free!
O bush unbrent, brenninge in Moyses sighte,
That ravisedest doun fro the Deitee
Thurgh thyn humblesse, the Goost that in th'alighte,
Of whos vertu whan He thyn herte lighte,
Conceyved was the Fadres sapience,
Help me to telle it in thy reverence!

1661

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
 Thy vertu, and thy grete humylitee 1665
 Ther may no tonge expresse in no science ;
 For somtyme, lady, er men praye to thee
 Thou goost biforn of thy benygnitee,
 And getest us the light thurgh thy preyere,
 To gyden us unto thy Sone so dere. 1670

My konnyng is so wayk, O blisful queene,
 For to declare thy grete worthinessse,
 That I ne may the weighte nat susteene ;
 But as a child of twelf monthe oold or lesse,
 That kan unnethes any word expresse, 1675
 Right so fare I; and therfor I yow preye,
 Gydeth my song that I shal of yow seye.

Explicit.

Heere bigynneth the Prioresses Tale.

Ther was in Asie in a greet citee,
 Amonges Cristene folk, a Jewerye,
 Sustened by a lord of that contree 1680
 For foule usure and lucre of vileynye,
 Hateful to Crist and to his compaignye ;
 And thurgh the strete men mighthe ryde or wende,
 For it was free, and open at either ende.

A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood 1685
 Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were
 Children an heepe, y-comen of Cristen blood,
 That lerned in that scole yeer by yere
 Swich maner doctrine as men used there,
 This is to seyn, to syngen and to rede, 1690
 As smale children doon in hire childhede.

Among thise children was a wydwes sone,
 A litel clergeoun, seven yeer of age,

That day by day to scole was his wone;
 And eek also, wheras he saugh th'ymage
 Of Cristes mooder, he hadde in usage
 As him was taught, to knele adoun and seye
 His *Ave Marie*, as he goth by the weye.

1695

Thus hath this wydwe hir litel sone y-taught
 Oure blisful lady, Cristes mooder dere,
 To worshippe ay, and he forgate it naught,
 For sely child wol alday soone leere.
 But ay, whan I remembre on this mateere,
 Seint Nicholas stant ever in my presence,
 For he so yong to Crist did reverence.

1700

1705

This litel child his litel book lernyng,
 As he sat in the scole at his prymer,
 He *Alma Redemptoris* herde synge,
 As children lerned hire antiphoner ;
 And, as he dorste, he drough him ner and ner,
 And herkned ay the wordes and the noote,
 Til he the firste vers koude al by rote.

1710

Noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye,
 For he so yong and tendre was of age ;
 But on a day his felawe gan he preye
 T'expounden him this song in his langage,
 Or telle him why this song was in usage ;
 This preyde he him to construe and declare
 Ful often tyme upon his knowes bare.

1715

His felawe, which that elder was than he,
 Answerde him thus : " This song, I have herd seye,
 Was maked of oure blisful lady free,
 Hire to salue, and eek hire for to preye
 To been oure help and socour whan we deye,
 I kan na moore expounde in this mateere ;
 I lerne song, I kan but smal grammeere."

1720

1725

“ And is this song maked in reverence
 Of Cristes mooder ? ” seyde this innocent ;
 “ Now certes, I wol do my diligence
 To konne it al, er Cristemasseye is went ;
 Though that I for my prymere shal be shent,
 And shal be beten thries in an houre,
 I wol it konne, oure lady for to honoure.”

1730

His felawe taughte him homward prively,
 Fro day to day, til he koude it by rote,
 And than he song it wel and boldely
 Fro word to word, acordyng with the noote ;
 Twies a day it passed thurgh his throote,
 To scoleward and homward whan he wente ;
 On Cristes mooder set was his entente.

1735

1740

As I have seyd, thurghout the Jewerie
 This litel child, as he cam to and fro,
 Ful murily than wolde he singe and crye
O Alma Redemptoris evermo ;
 The swetnes hath his herte perced so
 Of Cristes mooder, that to hir to preye,
 He kan nat stinte of syngynge by the weye.

1745

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,
 That hath in Jewes herte his waspes nest,
 Up swal, and seide, “ O Hebrayk peple, allas !
 Is this to yow a thing that is honest,
 That swich a boy shal walken as him lest
 In youre despyt, and synge of swich sentence,
 Which is agayn youre lawes reverence ? ”

1750

Fro thennes forth the Jewes han conspired
 This innocent out of this world to chace ;
 An homicyde thereto han they hyred,
 That in an aleye hadde a privee place ;
 And as the child gan forby for to pace,

1755

This cursed Jew him hente and heeld him faste, 1760
 And kitte his throte, and in a pit him caste.

I seye that in a wardrobe they him threwe
 Wheras thise Jewes purgen hire entraille.
 O cursed folk of Herodes al newe,
 What may youre yvel entente yow availle ! 1765
 Mordre wol out, certeyn it wol nat faille,
 And namely ther thonour of God shal sprede.
 The blood out cryeth on youre cursed dede !

“ O martir, souded to virginitee !
 Now maystow syngen, folwing ever in oon 1770
 The white lamb celestial ! ”—quod she—
 “ Of which the grete evaungelist, saint John,
 In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon
 Biforn this Lamb, and syngē a song al new,
 That never fleshly woimmen they ne knewe.” 1775

This poure wydwe awaiteth al that night
 After hir litel child, but he cam noght ;
 For which, as sone as it was dayes lyght,
 With face pale of drede and bisy thoght,
 She hath at scole and elleswhere him soght, 1780
 Til finally she gan so fer espie
 That he last seyn was in the Jewerie.

With moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed
 She gooth, as she were half out of hir mynde,
 To every place wher she hath supposed 1785
 By lyklihede hir litel child to fynde ;
 And ever on Cristes mooder meke and kynde
 She cryde, and atte laste thus she wroghte,
 Among the cursed Jewes she him soghte.

She frayneth and she preyeth pitously
 To every Jew that dwelte in thilke place, 1790

To telle hire, if hir child wente oght forby.
 They seyde, “ Nay.” But Jesu, of His grace,
 Yaf in her thought, inwith a litel space,
 That in that place after hir sone she cryde,
 Wher he was casten in a pit bisyde. 1795

O grete God, that parfournest Thy laude
 By mouth of innocents, lo heere Thy might !
 This gemme of chastite, this emeraude,
 And eek of martirdom the ruby bright, 1800
 Ther he with throte y-korven lay upright,
 He “ *Alma Redemptoris* ” gan to synge
 So loude, that al the place gan to ryng.

The Cristene folk that thurgh the strete wente,
 In comen, for to wondre upon this thyng, 1805
 And hastily they for the provost sente.
 He cam anon withouten tarrying,
 And herieth Crist that is of hevne kyng,
 And eek his mooder, honour of mankynde,
 And after that the Jewes leet he bynde. 1810

This child with pitous lamentacioun
 Uptaken was, syngynge his song alway ;
 And with honour of greet processioune
 They carien him unto the nexte abbay.
 His mooder swownyng by the beere lay ; 1815
 Unnethe myghte the peple that was there
 This newe Rachel brynge fro his bere.

With torment and with shameful deeth echon
 This provost dooth the Jewes for to sterue
 That of this mordre wiste, and that anon. 1820
 He nolde no swich cursednesse observe.
 Yvele shal have, that yvele wol deserve.
 Therfor with wilde hors he dide hem drawe,
 And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his beere ay lith this innocent
 Biforn the chief auter, whyl masse laste ;
 And after that the abbot with his covent
 Han sped hem for to burien him ful faste.
 And whan they hooly water on him caste,
 Yet spak this child, whan spreyned was hooly water, 1830
 And song “ *O Alma Redemptoris Mater!* ”

This abbot, which that was an hooly man
 As monkes been, or elles oughte be,
 This yonge child to conjure he bigan,
 And seyde, “ O deere child, I halse thee,
 In vertu of the Hooly Trinitie
 Tel me what is thy cause for to syngē,
 Sith that thy throte is kut, to my semyngē ? ”

“ My throte is kut unto my nekkeboon,”
 Seyde this child, “ and, as by wey of kynde,
 I sholde have dyed, ye, longe tyme agon,
 But Jesu Crist, as ye in bokes fynde,
 Wil that his glorie last and be in mynde ;
 And, for the worship of his mooder deere,
 Yet may I syngē ‘ *O Alma* ’ loude and cleere.

This welle of mercy, Cristes mooder sweete,
 I loved alwey, as after my konnyngē ;
 And whan that I my lyf sholde forlete,
 To me she cam, and bad me for to syngē
 This anthem verrailly in my deyinge,
 As ye han herd : and whan that I had songe,
 Me thoughte, she leyde a greyn upon my tonge.

Wherfore I syngē, and syngē I moot certeyn
 In honour of that blisful mayden free,
 Til fro my tonge of taken is the greyn.
 And after that thus seyde she to me :
 ‘ My litel child, now wol I fecche thee,

1825

1835

1840

1845

1850

1855

Whan that the greyn is fro thy tongue y-take,
Be nat agast, I wol thee nat forsake.' "

This hooly monk, this abbot, him meene I, 1860

His tongue out caughte, and took awey the greyn,
And he yaf up the goost ful softly.

And whan this abbot had this wonder seyn,

His salte teeris trikled doun as reyn,

And gruf he fil al plat upon the grounde, 1865

And stille he lay, as he had been y-bounde.

The covent eek lay, on the pavement

Wepynge, and heryen Cristes mooder deere;

And after that they ryse, and forth been went,

And tooken awey this martir fro his beere;

1870

And in a tomb of marbul stones cleere

Enclosen they his litel body sweete;

Ther he is now, God leve us for to meete.

O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also

With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,

1875

For it is but a litel while ago;

Preye eek for us, we sinful folk unstable,

That of His mercy, God so merciable

On us His grete mercy multiplie,

For reverence of His mooder Marie.

1880

Amen.

Here is ended the Prioresses Tale.

NOTES.

PROLOGUE.

The Prioress's Prologue is a Link eighteen lines long written by Chaucer specially to connect *The Shipman's Tale* (one of *thilke that sownen in to synne*) with the pretty child-like legend that comes naturally from the mouth of the courtly and refined Prioress. These connecting Links, together with the General Introductory Prologue form the framework of the Canterbury Tales, which have no proper ending, the last story being the long theological prose treatise, hurriedly labelled by Chaucer *The Parson's Tale*—although the Parson was to have told “*a merry tale in prose*”—and thrust in to fill up the gap at the end. Chaucer's project was evidently on too vast a scale either for the life (he evidently did not revise his work) or for the patience of the artist. These Links are not the least interesting part of his work, and as they were written *ad hoc*, they must be some of the last things that Chaucer wrote.

1625. *by Corpus Dominus* : i.e. *corpus Domini*, “the body of the Lord.” Our host Harry Bailey is the earliest Malaprop in English Literature, and it is interesting to see Chaucer anticipating Shakespeare's hostess, Mistress Quickly, and a long line of distorters of language, for whom Sheridan found a local habitation and a name in Mrs. Malaprop. For other malapropisms of the Host see *The Pardoner's Prologue*, C. 306, 312, and 314 (where this time he swears *By corpus bones!*).

Harry Bailey maintains his lead throughout, and is a keen critic of some of the stories. The *Prioress's Tale* leaves him dumb, but the grossness of the Shipman's elicits the praise and profanity of the text.

1626. *moote* : here means “may,” although it comes from an entirely different verb. We see the root-meaning in the defective Gothic verb *ga-mōt* (pret. *ga-mōsta*), “I find room for.” In Old English we have too the preteritive verb *mōt*, *mōste*, “I am allowed,” which became the Chaucerian *moot*, *moste*. *May* in Chaucer usually implies ability. Contrast the uses of *moot* and *may* in this couplet—

“ He *may* not spare, although he were his brother ;
He *moot* as well seye o word as another.” (A. 737-8.)

and of *can* and *moot* in “He *moot* reherce, as ny as evere he *can*” (i.e. “knows”) (A. 732).

Moot survives in the “*mote*” dear to writers of journalese in “So mote it be!”

1628. *yeve* : such forms where *y* is found instead of modern *g* (as in *give*) represent Southern English, which palatalised or fronted the gutturals before the vowels *e* and *i*. Compare the Northern forms “*give*,” “*gate*,” “*kirk*,” “*stink*,” “*brig*,” with the Southern “*yere*,” “*yat*” (Symonds’ *Yat*), “*church*,” “*stench*,” “*bridge*.”

this monk: i.e. the cunning hero of *The Shipman’s Tale*.

a thousand . . . yeer : “a thousand loads of bad years.” *Last* (from the same root as *load*, *lade*) is still used as the name of a weight or measure, e.g. “*a last of codfish*” is twelve barrels; “*a last of hides*” is twelve dozen; while “*a last of corn*” varies with the locality from 80 to 168 bushels.

1629. *beth* : imperative plural, cp. *draweth*, 1632.

1630. *putte . . . an ape* : “made a thorough fool of the man,” a proverbial expression used several times by Chaucer. The idea is that in a man’s hood you would expect to find the man himself, but he was so befooled that you found an ape (we should say “ass”) instead—an ape being a ludicrous imitation of a man. For “ape” meaning “fool” the *New English Dictionary* cites *Arthur and Merlin* (c. 1330), 814-816 :

“ Sche nere so michel ape
That sche hir laid doun to slape
At hir dore.”

Cp. also *Prologue to Canterbury Tales*, 706 : “He made the parson and the people his apes.”

1631. *seint Austin* : Saint Augustine, who is frequently quoted by Chaucer.

1632. *in* : “home,” “dwelling.” This shows the derivation of “inn,” which is the preposition “in” spelt differently for the sake of distinction; cp. “to” and “too,” “of” and “off,” etc. In Scots we have the compound form “*ben*” (*be innan*) in “but and ben.”

1636. *as it had been a mayde* : “as if he had been a maid,” in contrast with his usual innkeeper’s geniality (cp. 1625). The Host’s politeness is shown by his use of “*yow*” and “*ye*”: contrast his “*thou*” (1626) to the Shipman.

THE PRIORESS’S TALE.

1643. *Domine, dominus noster* : this is the opening of Psalm viii. in the Vulgate:—“*Domine, dominus noster, quam admirabile est nomen Tuum in universa terra!*” the first three verses of which the

Prioreess paraphrases in her first stanza. The opening is pecouliarly appropriate to the religious character of a Nun, who would know the Psalms well from their occurrence in the religious office.

1644. quod she : an indication that this Tale was written for its place in the collection (see Introd., p. 25).

1648. parfourned . . . soukyngē : the Authorised Version has "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength," but cp. St. Matthew xi. 25 and xxi. 16 ("Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings *thou hast perfected praise*"). The Prioreess has perhaps in her head one special example, viz. St. Nicholas of Myra (cp. lines 1704-5 below), our *Santa Claus*, who even when an infant, so says his *Legend*, fasted regularly every Wednesday and Friday till after sunset. *Parfourned* translates *perfecisti* of the Vulgate, "performed," i.e. perfected. Langland (*Piers Plowman*, B., v. 607) has the same word, but in Wyclif (St. John v. 36) it is already distorted into "performe" from a false etymology, as it has nothing to do with "form."

1650. kan or may : "je sais ou je peux"; "can" has here its original force "know how," while "may" is the modern "can": see note on line 1626 above.

1651. the white lily : i.e. *lilium candidum* (the Madonna or St. Joseph's lily), from its pure white petals, has been taken as the emblem in ecclesiastical art of virginity in general, and especially of the Blessed Virgin or St. Joseph.

1655-6. for she . . . bote : "for she herself is honour and (second only to her Son) the source of grace and healing to the soul." This is a commonplace of Catholic theology, in which Mary is represented as Intercessor with her Son for her clients. For "root" cp. the "*Salve radix*" of the antiphon *Ave Regina*, the Lent anthem corresponding with the Advent *Alma Redemptoris* of line 1744.

1658. O bush unbrent : this application to the Blessed Virgin—"a mother maid, a maiden mother free"—of the bush seen by Moses burning but unconsumed is taken from the services of the early Church. The third Antiphon at Lauds in the Little Office of the B.V.M. from Christmas to Candlemas runs : "*Rubum quem viderat Moyses incombustum, conservatam agnovimus tuam laudabilem virginitatem*" ("The bush which Moses saw unburnt we recognise as your praiseworthy maiden-hood preserved"). Cp. Chaucer's *A. B. C., a Hymn to the Virgin* :—

" Moises that saugh the bush with flaumes rede
Brenninge, of whiche nevere a stikke brende,
Was signe of thyn unwemmed maidenhede," etc.

1659-60. that ravisedest . . . th'alighte : "who didst through thy humility force to come down from the Deity the Holy Ghost Who alighted in thee." *Ravisedest* means more than "didst draw": it has a very strong meaning and implies that the Virgin's humility was so great that the Holy Ghost was compelled, as it were, to

descend. The stress is on *humblesse*, which the poet is here emphasising. *Th'alighte* = “in thee alighted.” A coalescence of the objective personal pronoun preceding the verb is rare. We have in Middle English agglutination of a preceding nominative pronoun as in *icham* (“I am”), and fairly commonly of a pronoun nominative or objective following the verb, as in *mosti* (“must I”), *repentedstow* (“repentedst thou”), *caldes* (“called them”).

1661. *lighte* : “lit,” “enlightened.” Skeat thinks “cheered,” “lightened” is more probable, and compares *Squire's Tale*, F. 396; but the point here seems to be that the Wisdom of the Father (*i.e.* the Word Incarnate) was conceived in the illumination of His Mother's Heart by the Holy Ghost. Dante in the passage which Chaucer had before him speaks of *heat*, but uses the figure of a *torch* :—

“ Per lo cui *caldo* nell' eterna pace
Cosi è germinato questo fiore.
Qui sei a noi meridiana *face*.”

And cp. 1658 above (also Chaucer's *A. B. C.*, 93-94).

For the rhyme *lighte* : *lighte* cp. *seke* : *seke*, *Prologue to Canterbury Tales*, 17-18, and other instances *passim*. Identical rhyme was regarded as an ornament by Chaucer's French masters, but only in the case of homonyms ; cp. *Roman de la Rose* :—

“ Grant bien se l'uns de nous a fait,
Par nous tous le tenons a fait.”

1667. The original of this and the following two lines is Dante's *Paradiso*, XXXIII. 16-18, which Chaucer had also used in *The Second Nun's Tale*, 53-56 :—

“ Nat oonly helpest hem that preyen thee,
But often tyme, of thy benygnynsee
Ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche,
Thou goost biforn and art hir lyves leche.”

Dante has :—

“ La tua benignità non pur soccorre
A chi domanda, ma molte fiate
Literamente al dòmandar precorre.”

1671. *wayk* : this cannot represent O.E. *wāc*, which would have become “woke”; it must therefore be a Scandinavian borrowing, cp. Icelandic *veikr* : in the same way “bleak” has ousted “bloke.”

1672. *for to* : this strengthening of *to* before the gerundial infinitive begins in Late O.E., and may be due to French influence ; cp. *O.E. Chronicle*, E. 1127 : “Oc se kyng hit dide for to havene sibbe,” and the Biblical “What went ye out for to see?” Since

the time of the Authorised Translation of the Bible its use has become unfashionable.

1675. *unnethes*: the Ellesmere MS. reads *unnethe*, which will not scan without hiatus: other MSS. *unnethes*.

1678. *in Asie*: i.e. Asia Minor. Chaucer has changed the habitat of the story, which in the analogues is either left indefinite, or placed in the country of the narrator, or else in England; let us hope he made the change in the desire not to exacerbate unduly the feelings of his countrymen against English Jews.

1679. *a Jewerye*: in most of the important towns of Europe certain quarters were set apart for the Jews, with the object generally to protect them from Christian fanaticism. Such quarters were among the lowest portions of the town, and the inhabitants were usually subjected to strict supervision and irritating regulations as to style of dress and hours of entry and exit. The best known Jewries in England were those of London (cp. *Old Jewry*), York, Lincoln, and Oxford. At Rome the Jews were under the special protection of the Pope, and their *Jewry* was called the *Ghetto*. "Among other pieces of policy, there is a Synagogue of Jews permitted here (as in other places of Italy) under the Pope's Nose, but they go with a Mark of Distinction in their Hats: they are tolerated for advantage of Commerce, wherein the Jews are wonderful dexterous, tho' most of them be only brokers and Lombardiers, and they are held to be here, as the Cynic held Women to be, *malum necessarium*."—(*Epistolae Ho-Elianae*, I. 38.)

Even in towns where there were no restrictions as to residence Jews would naturally tend, as they do still, to form a separate quarter of their own, partly because they would in the Middle Ages belong to only one or two trades.

1680-1. *sustened . . . vileynye*: the ruler protected the Jews, not from kindly feelings but because they were useful for purposes of trade. (Cp. the extract from Howell's Letters above.) The taking of usury by Christians was frowned upon in the Middle Ages, but was tolerated as a necessary evil in the case of Jews. This also increased the odium in which they were held, as human nature finds it difficult to forgive a creditor.

1681. *usure*: the word usury did not necessarily imply an exorbitant rate of interest: it stands simply for the Latin *usura*, "interest." Aristotle taught that money was barren, and the Fathers of the Church developed this thought. By their own law, too, the Jews were debarred from taking interest except from Gentiles (*Deuteronomy xxiii. 19, 20*).

lucre of vileynye: "lucre arising from a villainous trade." Another reading is *felonye*.

1682. *hateful . . . compaignye*: the opinion of the medieval Christian with regard to usury.

1684. *for . . . ende*: many Jewries had gates through which egress or ingress was not permitted before or after certain hours: In this particular *Ghetto*, it will be noted, there was a Christian

school (1686), so that either it was not strictly a Jews' quarter, or the school has been placed within it by the composer of the legend to add an air of probability to the narrative.

1689. **maner doctrine**: *of* is usually omitted by Chaucer after *maner*, in imitation of Anglo-Norman usage.

men: "one"; see Glossary.

1693. **clergeoun**: in *The Boy Killed by a Jew for Singing Gaude Maria*, an Analogue of *The Prioress's Tale* (Introd., p. 26), the word is *clerçoncel* or "little clergeoun." It means simply, as Tyrrwhitt says, "a young clerk," in the extended sense of "clerk" meaning "scholar"; in fact the word is evidently used here as a pretty way of describing a young child just beginning his letters. Ducange gives "Clergonus, junior clericus vel puer choralis," etc., which Skeat cites to imply "that he was a chorister as well." But there is nothing in the Tale to show us he was a chorister (rather the contrary; see lines 1707 ff.), and calling the tiny lad "a little clerk" is a subtle artistic touch which adds pathos.

1694. **his wone**: sc. to go.

1696. **of Cristes . . . usage**: scan—

Of Críst | es móo | der hé | hadd(e) in | uságé.

1698. **Ave Marie**: *Hail Mary* (see St. Luke i. 28 and 42).

1702. **for . . . leere**: "for an innocent child will always learn quickly"; a proverb. *Sely* = "simple"; a sad instance of the deterioration of words, "silly" having originally meant blessed or "simple"; cp. German *selig*. In the *Old English Homilies* (twelfth century) it means "wise." Our Lord could be called with all reverence by an early poet "a sely child." *Lere* from its derivation (cp. German *lehren*) should mean "teach," but it was at an early date confounded with its derivative "learn"; hence *lere* in M.E. means either "teach" or "learn," and *lerne* on the other hand often means "teach."

1704. **Seint Nicholas . . . presence**: "St. Nicholas always comes before my mind"; see note on line 1648 above. Very little is known of the life of St. Nicholas (born 345 or 352). He was Bishop of Myra in Lycia, whence his remains were stolen and brought to Bari in Italy, so that he is called indifferently St. Nicholas of Myra or of Bari, to distinguish him from the later Augustinian Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (c. 1346), who was also from childhood a model of sanctity. St. Nicholas of Myra was a very popular saint in the Middle Ages, both in the East and in the West. He is the patron saint of Russia, of mariners and other travellers, of the young, and of scholars. English schoolboys used to celebrate his festival, and he is not wholly forgotten even now under the guise of Santa Claus.

1708. **Alma Redemptoris**: the opening words of an antiphon or anthem in honour of the "Mother of the Redeemer" still sung in churches of the Roman obedience during Advent up to Candlemas.

1709. **antiphoner**: antiphoner or book containing the anthems or antiphons of the season. *Antiphon* and *anthem* are doublets.

1710. **ner**: the true comparative form, the modern "near-er" being a double comparative. Note Wordsworth's mistranslation of this line (Introduction, p. 24).

1712. **koude**: the past tense of *konnen* with its primitive meaning "know": it is now wrongly spelt "could," the *l* being due to false analogy with *should* and *would*.

1713. **was to seye**: "meant."

1715. **gan**: the preterite of *ginnen*; here as often in M.E. the word is used merely as a sign of past time.

1719. **knowes**: the true etymological plural of "knee," the nom. case singular of which has lost a *w*; O.E. sing. *cneo(w)*, plur. *cnēow*. Analogy has made this word and many others follow the general rule.

1720. **elder**: in Chaucer's day *elder* had still the full comparative force now restricted to *older*; again, it is the true etymological form, "older" being a later invention; cp. O.E. (*e)ald*, comparative (*i)eldra*, superlative (*i)eldest*.

1722-3. **was . . . salue**: "was made concerning our blessed noble Lady, to salute her." *Free* is a common epithet in chivalrous English poetry, implying "high-born," "noble," and the like; cp. *The Pearl*, 796: "My joy, my bliss, my Leman free!"

1726. **I kan . . . grammeere**: "I know only very little grammar." *Grammar* was used in the Middle Ages with special reference to Latin Grammar. A Grammar School is a school founded to teach Latin and (later) Greek Grammar.

1731. **shent**: "brought to shame," "severely punished." It is a pity the good verb "shend" should be obsolete: Spenser was fond of it, Dryden used it, and Shenstone imitating Spenser tried to revive it:—

"And oft-times on vagaries idly bent
For unkempt hair, or task unconned, are sorely shent."

1733. Scan—I wól | it kónn(e) | oure lá | dy for | t(o) honóur | e.

1734. **homward**: "on their way home."

1740. **set . . . entente**: "his whole thought was set."

1748-9. **the serpent . . . nest**: "a serpent with a wasp's nest" is an early example of the figure of speech called by English people an "Irish bull." The two lines are a typical instance of the Christian bigotry against Jews so painfully prevalent in the Middle Ages, and unfortunately not wholly dead yet. Browning's lines in *Holy-Cross Day* are as true as they are sad:—

"We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now!
Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
To have called these Christians, had we dared! . . .

By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
 By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
 By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
 By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
 By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
 And the summons to Christian fellowship."

1750. **up swal**: "swelled up," i.e. filled their hearts with anger. *Swell* has become a weak verb; it was strong in M.E. and in O.E.—*swellan*, pret. sing. *sweall*; pret. pl. *swullen*; past part. *swollen*. The strong participle "swoln" or "swollen" is still retained as an adjective.

1751. **honest**: with its Latin signification "honourable," "right and proper."

1752. **lest**: contr. 3rd person sing. = *lesteth*: "listeth," "pleases," used impersonally.

1753. **youre despyt**: "in contempt of you"; *your* is objective genitive.

1753. **of swich sentence**: "about such doctrine." There is, however, nothing in the *Alma Redemptoris* specifically against the Jewish religion except that it is a Christian hymn, but a study of the Analogues will clear up the difficulty, which so far appears not to have been noticed by commentators. In some of the Analogues—evidently an earlier form of the story—the boy sings the hymn *Gaude Maria*, which had as a response, "*Erubescat Judeus infelix qui dicit Christum ex Josephi semine esse natum*" ("Let the wretched Jew blush who says Christ was the son of Joseph"). Other Analogues and Chaucer's Legend represent then a later version containing no proper explanation of the anger of the Jews at a supposed insult.

1758. **a privee place**: "a privy," explained by "wardrobe" in 1762, which is a euphemism like our modern "closet."

1763. **wheras**: merely a strengthened "where," as commonly in Chaucer.

1764. **of Herodes al newe**: "of Herods (i.e. of people like Herod), wholly new." This is the reading of the Ellesmere MS.; the Lansdowne MS. reads *O Herodes*.

1767. **namely**: "especially"; cp. *Pardoner's Tale*, 402:—

"To make hem free
 To yeven hir pens, and *namely* unto me";

and 563:—

"Now kepe yow fro the white and fro the rede,
 And *namely* fro the whitē wyn of Lepe."

ther: M.E. for "where" as well as for "there"; in 1796 we have the modern use.

1768. blood out cryeth: like the blood of Abel, Genesis iv. 10: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

1769. souded to virginitee: "sealed for ever (lit. consolidated) to the Virgin host." *Sou(d)* would be the true French form of "solid," and in fact survives as the name of a coin; the more learned Latin form is seen in *solid*, *solder*, *soldier*, *consolidate*, etc.

1770. maystow: see note on 1660.

ever in oon: "continually"; cp. *The Squire's Tale*, F. 417: "And ever in oon she cryde alway and shryghte"; and *The Clerk's Tale*, E. 602: "But ever in oon ylyke sad and kynde."

1773. Pathmos: Patmos, now called *Patino*, the island to which St. John was banished, and where he wrote the last book of the Bible called the Apocalypse. It belongs to the Sporades group in the Aegean Sea, lying off the coast of Asia Minor.

which seith: see *Revelations* xiv. 3, 4: "And they sung as it were a new canticle . . . they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

1779. face: dissyllabic, the final *e* representing the sonant *e* of the French word. The true English word for "face," *lere* (Old English *hlēor*), disappeared owing to confusion with *lere* (< O.E. *lira*) meaning "muscle," "skin."

bisy: the Midland form, "busy," being S.W. English. With our usual eccentricity of spelling we retain the S.W. form and the Midland pronunciation.

1781. she gan . . . espie: "she found out so far"; for *gan* see note on 1715 above.

1788. and . . . wroghte: "and at last she did this." *Atte* is a contraction of "at the" and hence dissyllabic.

1792. wente ought forby: "had passed at all that way."

1794. inwith: "within," a common form said to be of Northern origin, sometimes contracted to *iwith*.

1796. bisyde: adverb: "close by."

1801. lay upright: "lay on his back." *Upright* has often in Chaucer this meaning of "face upwards"; cp. *Monk's Tale*, B. 3761:—

"Judith, a woman, as he lay upryghte
Sleeping, his heed of smoot";

and *Knight's Tale*, 2008, "gaping upright"; also *Nun's Priest's Tale*, 4232; *Romaunt of the Rose*, 1604, "that made him swithe to lie upright," i.e. "on his back," or "dead." It is found too with this meaning in an O.E. glossary. *Upright* with the modern meaning is also found in Chaucer, cp. *Pardoner's Tale*, 674; *Boke of the Duchesse*, 451.

1803. loude: one syllable in scansion, and therefore an adjective.

1805. comen: 3 pl. pret. ind. of *come(n)*, *cam* (1806), *comen*, (*y*)*comen*: cp. O.E. *cuman*, *com*, (*cam*), *comon*, *gecumon*.

1806. **provost**: Latin *praeposit-us*, O.E. *prafost*, still survives for the “mayor” of a town in Scotland; cp. Chaucer’s *Boece*, I. 4, 110: “How ofte eek have I put of or cast out hym Trygwille, *provost* of the Kyngis hous.”

1807. **anon**: “in an instant”; it is easy to remember the derivation of *anon*, as *an* = “on,” and *on* = “an”; “on an” = “in one,” or as we say “at once”; O.E. *on ānum*.

1810. **leet**: pret. ind. of *lete(n)*, “to let” or “allow.” The lengthened vowel *ee* represents the long vowel of the pret. of O.E. *lætan*: *lēt*: *lēton*: *læten*.

1814. **the nexte abbay**: “the abbey hard by.” An “abbey” means properly either a congregation of monks or nuns, or, as here, the minster or abbey buildings. Westminster *Abbey* (*i.e.* West Abbey *Abbey*), for example, was once a church served by Benedictine monks. The word goes back to Syriac *abba*, “father.”

1817. **this newe Rachel**: cp. St. Matthew ii. 18, where (following Jeremiah) “Rachel” is used figuratively for the bereaved Jewish mothers of Bethlehem. There is nothing in the life of the O.T. Rachel to accord with the passage, but Chaucer like others may have imagined that there was.

1819. **dooth... for to sterfe**: “makes them die,” “puts to death.” The modern *starve* (the *a* for *e* before *r* shows Norman influence, cp. the pronunciation of *clerk*, *Derby*, *sergeant*) curiously enough is restricted in literary English to one kind of death, although O.E. like modern German (*sterben*) did not know of this distinction. In provincial English strangely the word is usually restricted to dying of, or suffering from, cold; cp. Burns (*The Two Dogs*):—

“It’s true, they needna starve or sweat,
Thro’ winter’s cauld, or summer’s heat”;

but he also writes just above:—

“Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,
An’ they maun starve o’ cauld and hunger.”

In Northern English “starve” means “be very cold,” not “be without food.”

1821. **he nolde... observe**: “he would stand on no ceremony with such accursed crime.” For this meaning of “observe,” derived from its Latin use in “observing auguries,” cp. Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, IV. iii. 45: “Must I observe you? must I stand and crouch under your testy humour?”; and *Hamlet*, III. i. 162: “the observed of all observers.”

1823. **with wilde... drawe**: “he had them drawn by wild horses,” a favourite punishment in ancient times; cp. Alexander Neckham, *De naturis rerum*, I. c. 41: “Miles enim quidam nimis zelotes philomelam quatuor equis distrahi praecepit” (“A certain

soldier, owing to his excessive jealousy, had the nightingale drawn by four horses"). In *The Owl and the Nightingale*, which follows Neckham we have the story (line 1091) how a jealous knight punished in this way a nightingale, which by its too sweet song had allured his wife from the paths of virtue. Readers of the Classics will remember how Poseidon punished Hippolytus in this way at the prayer of Theseus. The same punishment was inflicted in 1610 upon François Ravaillac for assassinating Henry IV. of France—"he scaped only with this: his body was pulled between four horses, that one might hear his bones crack, and after a dislocation they were set again." (Howell, *Ep. Ho-elianaæ*, I. 18.)

with: in Chaucer's day *with* was growing in fashion as the preposition to express the agent or instrument: *of, from, with* is the order of popularity in Early English; *by* is rare, and does not become common till after Shakespeare's day. In the next line *by* means "according to"; in line 1647 it is used instrumentally.

hors: is neuter in O.E. and the plural is the same as the singular. The fact that the word ended in *s* would also tend to make its plural and singular the same.

1824. *heng*: there were two verbs in O.E., *hongan* (*hōn*), strong, transitive, and *hangian*, weak, intransitive. *Hēng* is the past tense of the former. In modern English the usage has changed, the weak form *hanged* being used for the death penalty.

1827. *covent*: i.e. the monks; *covent* is the Norman-French form; cp. modern French *couvent*, and English *Covent Garden, Coventry*. "Convent" is really epicene in its application, but popular usage in England makes it equivalent to "nunnery," although there is no reason why we should not say a "convent of monks." Covent Garden in fact was originally the garden of the Benedictine monks to whom Westminster Abbey belonged.

1828. *han*: common contracted form of *haven*.

sped: "speed" (O.E. *spēdan*) is here on its way to its modern meaning, but has not quite arrived there, as the addition of *ful faste* shows. *Speed* means properly "to prosper" (cp. God speed the plough! Good speed! etc.). As the word was often used with the word "way" and the like, with the idea of bringing one *quickly* back from the perils of a journey, it came to develop quite early its modern meaning; cp. O.E. adverb dative plural *spēdum*, "quickly": Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, I. 359: *homward he him spedde*; Ormulum, 18094: *erneth toward te sae with mikel sped*.

1829. *hooly water*: it was a very early Christian custom, taken perhaps from the beautiful idea of the heathen Roman *aqua lustralis*, or else from the Jewish ritual, to bless water for the use of the faithful; with this they sprinkled themselves before entering or leaving the church, etc. Tertullian mentions the custom in the second century.

1830. *spreynd*: a contraction of *sprenged*, p.p. of *sprengen*, "to sprinkle"; *gn* naturally develops into *yn* or *ny*. Our "sprink-le"

is a frequentative formation ; cp. *Ancren Riwle* : “ *sprengeth ou mid holi water* ” ; and Chaucer, *Knight's Tale*, 1311 :—

“ A fewe fraknes in his face y-spreynd,
Betwixen yelow and somdel blak y-meynd,”

where *y-meynd* = *y-menged* (“ ming-led ”).

1835. **halse** : “ adjure,” literally “ embrace,” from *halsien* (O.E. *halsian*, from *hals*, “ a neck ”), lit. “ to throw the arms round the neck.” Cp. Seinte Marherete—“ ich halsi thee o Godes nome.”

1840. **as by wey of kynde** : “ in the natural order of things.”

1843. **last and be** : pres. subjunctives after *wil*.

1847. **as after my konnynge** : “ according to my skill ” or “ knowledge.”

1848. **sholde forlete** : “ ought to have given up.”

1857. **now wol** : the metrical stress and emphasis is on the *wol* : “ now ” is not an adverb of time here, but a conjunction expressing affirmation such as “ indeed,” “ lo,” and the like. It is still used in this way ; e.g. “ Now, mind what he will tell you ! ”

1865. **and gruf . . . grounde** : “ and he fell flat grovelling to the ground ” ; *gruf* is the root of our *grovel*, possibly a false verbal form invented from “ *gruf-long* ” or “ *gruf-ling* ”, meaning “ along your *gruf* or belly,” but wrongly taken as a participle. It may be a Scandinavian borrowing ; cp. Icelandic *a grufu* and the verbs *grufa* and *grufla*, “ grovel.” In Norfolk and Suffolk we still meet the phrase “ to lie gruftlins.”

plat : the French adjective used adverbially : cp. Chaucer, *Pardoners Tale*, C. 648 : “ I wol thee telle al plat.”

1871. **cleere** : “ pure white.”

1873. **leve** : “ allow.” The noun “ leave ” meaning “ permission ” still survives, but the verb is dead.

1874. **Hugh of Lincoln** : a child said to have been martyred by the Jews of Lincoln in 1255. He must not be confused with the other St. Hugh, of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln, at whose death in 1200 the Jews are said to have wept, as he had been a most charitable protector of theirs.

Hugh of Lincoln’s murder was one of the cases of a charge of murder for purposes of ritual against the Jews. Although such charges are preposterous and absurd, they were believed by ignorant people in the Middle Ages, and are still believed even down to our day in backward countries like Russia. (See Introduction, p. 23.)

GLOSSARY.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE GLOSSARY.

acc.	= accusative	n.	= neuter
A.F.	= Anglo-French	num.	= numeral
adj.	= adjective	O.E.	= Old English (<i>i.e.</i> Anglo-Saxon)
adv.	= adverb	O.F.	= Old French
Arab.	= Arabic	O.H.G.	= Old High German
C.	= Celtic	O.Ir.	= Old Irish
cf.	= compare	O. Merc.	= Old Mercian
cog.	= cognate	onom.	= onomatopoeic
comp.	= comparative	O. North.	= Old Northumbrian
Dan.	= Danish	orig.	= original, originally
dat.	= dative	O.S.	= Old Saxon
dem.	= demonstrative	pass.	= passive
dim., dimin.	= diminutive	pers.	= person
Du.	= Dutch	pp.	= preterite participle
F.	= French	prep.	= preposition
f.	= feminine	pres., pr.	= present
fr.	= from	pret.	= preterite
Fris.	= Frisian	pron.	= pronoun
G.	= modern German	Prov.	= Provençal (old)
Gr.	= Greek	ptc.	= participle
Ic., Icel.	= Icelandic (old)	ptc. pr., pr. ptc.	= present participle
imper., imperat.	= imperative	reflex.	= reflexive
ind., indic.	= indicative	rel.	= relative
inf.	= infinitive	sb.	= substantive
influ.	= influence of	Scand.	= Scandinavian
interr.	= interrogative	sg., s.	= singular
It.	= Italian	Skt.	= Sanskrit
L.	= Latin	str.	= strong
lit.	= literally	supl.	= superlative
L.L.	= Late Latin	Swed., Sw.	= Swedish
L.W.S.	= Late West Saxon	Teut.	= Teutonic
m.	= masculine	v.	= <i>vide</i> , see
M.E.	= Middle English	v. i.	= verb intransitive
Merc.	= Mercian	v. t.	= verb transitive
M.H.G.	= Middle High German	w.	= weak
Mn. E.	= Modern English		

SIGNS.

- [] — derivation, or reference to cognates, is given within [].
 - * denotes hypothetical form assumed according to phonetic principles.
 - + means compounded with.
 - ? „ probably, possibly.
 - < „ derived from.
 - ∴ „ therefore.
-

A

abbay: sb. [A.F. *abbeie*; Church L. *abbatia*, < ab-*bātem*], *abbey*, 1814.

about: prep. and adv. [O.E. on-*būtan* = on-be-ūtan], *about*, *round about*.

acorden : vb. infin. [L. *ad* *cord*, stem of *cor*, heart, O.F. *acorder*, agree], pres. part. *accordyng*, *agreeing*, 1737.

adoun: adv. [O.E. *of dūne*, off the hill], *down*.

after: prep. [O.E. æfter = æfter, comp. form fr. of], *after*, 1777; *as after*, *according to*, 1847.

agasten: vb. t. [O.E. ā+gæstan, *to frighten*], pp. *agast*, = *afraid*, 1859, *to terrify*.

agayn: prep. [O.E. ongēan, on-geagn], *against*, *contrary to*, 1754.

ago, agon: adv. [O.E. ā + gān, pp. of āgān = *to go forth*], *ago*.

al: adj., sb. [O.E. eall, all, al], *all, everything*; adv. *all, entirely*, 1774.

alday: adv. *always, continually*.

aleye: sb. [A.F. alee < aler, *to go*], *alley*, 1758.

alighten: vb. infin. [O.E. ālihtan = *to descend, alight*], pret. *alighted, descended*, 1660.

also, al-so: adv. and conj. [O.E. eal-swā], *as*.

alwey: adv. [O.E. ealne weg], *always, all the while*.

amonges: prep. [O.E. on-geomang], *among*.

anon: adv. [O.E. on ān = *into one*; on āne = *in one (moment)*], *anon, at once, immediately*.

answeren: vb. infin. [O.E. andswieran, where and- = *in return*, and swerian = *to swear, affirm*], *answer*.

antem: sb. [O.E. antefn < L. antiphona, Gk. pl. ἀντίφωνα, from ἀντί and φωνή, I sound in answer], *anthem*.

antiphoner: sb. [*see antem*], *anthem-book* (1709).

ape: sb. [O.E. apa], *ape*.

as: conj. and adv. [O.E. eal-swā], *as, like*, 1864; *as by (in asseveration) = so*, 1840.

atte: [M.E. atten, O.E. æt-ðæm], *at the*; *atte laste = at last*, 1788.

auter: sb. [O.F. auter, L. altare, altus], *high altar*.

availlen: vb. infin. [O.F. valoir < L. valere], *to avail*.

awaite: vb. t. [O.F. aguaitier > A.F. awaitier], *to await*; pr. s. *awaiteteth = watches*, 1776.

ay: adv. [Icel. ei, ey], *ever, always*.

B

bad: *see bidden*.

bar, bare: *see beren*.

been, ben: vb. [O.E. bēon = *to be*], *to be*; beth, imper. pl., *be*, 1629.

beere: sb. [O.E. bær], *a bier*.

benygnitee: sb. [L. benignitatem, A.F. benignité], *goodness*.

beren: vb. t. [O.E. beran, Icel. bera], *to bear, carry*; bar, pret. s., 1652.

beten: vb. t. [O.E. bēatan], *to beat*; beten, pp. *beaten*, 1732.

bidden: vb. t. [O.E. biddan, but often confused with O.E. bēodan], *to ask, command*; pret. s. *bad = commanded*, 1849.

biforn: adv. [O.E. biforan], *beforehand*, 1668.

biforn: prep. [O.E. biforan], *before*.

bigynnen; vb. infin. [O.E. gin-nan, to begin, with prefix bi-added at a later date], pret. s. bigan, pp. bigonne, *begin*.
biholden: vb. t. [O.E. be-heal-dan], *to behold*; imper. pl. hoold (introductory line).
binden: vb. t. [O.E. bindan], *to bind*; pp. y-bounde, *bound*.
bisy, besy: adj. [O.E. bysig], *busy; anxious*, 1779.
bisyde: prep. and adv., *beside, near*.
blisful: adj. [O.E. blīð + s = bliss; blīðe + ful = blissful], *happy; conferring bliss; sainted*, 1671.
blood: sb. [O.E. blōd], *blood*, 1768; *lineage*, 1687.
bote: sb. [O.E. bōt], *profit, salvation*, 1656.
bountee: sb. [O.F. bonteit, L. bonitatem], *goodness, kindness*.
brennen: vb. [O.E. bærnan (influenced by Icel. brenda) causal, from pret. of beornan = to burn], *to burn*.
brest: sb. [O.E. brēost, Icel. brjost], *breast*.
burien: vb. t. [O.E. byrgan], *to bury*.
by: prep. *by, beside*, 1626.

C

cam: v. *comen*.

carien: vb. t. [O.F. carier, to carry as in a car, from O.F. car, from L. carrus (a Celtic root)], *to carry*.

casten: vb. t., pret. s. caste, 1829, pp. casten, 1796 [Icel. kasta], *to cast*.
certes: adv. [O.F. certes, L. certas, plu. f. of certus, certain], *certainly*.
certeyn: adv. [O.F. certain, L. certus, sure, with suffix = L. -anus], *certainly, indeed, surely*.
chace: vb. t. [O.F. chasser], *to chase, drive*.
childhede: sb. [O.E. cildhad], *childhood*.
cleere: adj. [A.F. cler, L. clarum], *clear, bright*, 1871.
cleere: adv., *clearly*, 1845.
clergeoun: sb. [A.F. clergeon, cp. Span. clerezon], *a little scholar*.
comen: vb. infin., pret. s. cam, pret. pl. comen, pp. comen, y-comen [O.E. cuman], *to come*.
companye: sb. [O.F. compagnie, from O.F. compain, an associate at meals; from L. cum + panem], *company*.
conjure: vb. t. [O.F. conjurer, L. conjurare], *to conjure*.
construe: vb. t. [O.F. construir, L. construere], *to construe, translate*.
contree: sb. [O.F. contree, Prov. contrada, L.L. contrata, L. contra = against; ∴ contree, lit. = the land over against us], *country*.
corpus: sb., *body*. Corpus Dominus, false Latin for Corpus Domini, *body of the Lord*, 1625.

- cost**: sb. [O.F. *coste*, from L. *costa*, a rib, side], *coast*.
- covent**: sb. [O.F. *covent* or *convent*; Church L. *conventus*, from L. *convenire*, to come together], *a convent*.
- Cristemasse**: sb. [O.E. *Cristemæsse*; *Christus* + Church L. *missa*], *Christmas*.
- Cristen**: adj. [L. *Christianus*], *Christian*.
- cursedness**: sb. [cp. O.E. *cur-sian*, to curse, and *curs*, a malediction], *accursed sin, wickedness, malice*, 1821.
- curteisly**: adv. [from *curteis*, courteous < A.F. *curteis*, L.L. *cortensem*, *curtensem*], *courteously*.

D

- dar**: see *durren*.
- deeth**: sb. [O.E. *dēad*, Icel. *dauði*], *death*.
- demen**: vb. [O.E. *dēman*], *decide, judge*.
- dere**: adj. [O.E. *dēore*, *dýre*], *dear*.
- despyt**: sb. [A.F. *despit* = contempt, L. *despectus*, a looking down upon], *spite, contempt*; in your despyt, *in contempt of you*, 1753.
- deye**: vb. [Icel. *deyja*], pp. *deyed, to die*.
- deyinge**: sb., *death*, 1850.
- dignitee**: sb. [F. *dignité*, O.F. *digniteit*, L. *dignitatem*], *worth, dignity, rank*.
- doon**: vb. t., pr. s., dooth, 1819; pret. *dide*, *dide him drawe*,

caused to be drawn, 1823 [O.E. *dōn*, pret. *dyde*], *do, cause, make*.

dorste: see *durren*.

doun: adv. [O.E. *dūn*], *down*.

drawe(n): vb. t., imper. plu. *draweth, invite*, 1632; pret. s. *drough*; refl. *drew himself, i.e. approached*, 1710; [O.E. *dragan*], *to draw*.

drede: sb. [M.E. vb. *drede q. v.*], *dread, fear*.

dreden: vb. t. [O.E. (on)drē-dan], *dread, fear*.

drough: see *drawe*.

durren: vb. infin., pr. s. *dar*; pret. s. *dorste*, 1710; [O.E. *dearran*, pr. s. *dear*, pret. s. *dorste*], *to dare*.

E

- echoon**: [O.E. *ælc + ān*], *each one*.
- eek**: adv. [O.E. *ēac*, Goth. *auk*], *also, moreover*.
- elder**: adj. comp. [O.E. *eald*, comp. *ieldra*], *older*.
- elles**: adv. [O.E. *elles*, cog. Gk. *ἄλλος*, L. *alius*], *else*.
- elleswher**: adv. [O.E. *elles + hwær*], *elsewhere*.
- encresen**: vb. t. [A.F. *encrese*, stem of *encrescerai*, fut. of *encrestre*, L. *increscere*, to grow upon], *increase, cause to increase*.
- entente**: sb. [O.F. *entente* < L. *intentum*], *intent, 1765; attention, mind, 1740*.
- entraille**: sb. [O.F. *entailles*,

- L.L. intrania, L. interanea (Pliny), from *interus*, inward], *entrails*.
- er**: adv. and conj. [O.E. *ār*], *ere, before*.
- espye**: vb. t. [O.F. *espier* < O.H.G. *spēhon*, cp. L. *specere*], *to observe, perceive*.
- evaungelist**: sb. [O.F. *evangeliste*, L. *evangelista*, Gk. *euāγγελoτης*], *evangelist*.
- ever**: adv. [O.E. *āfre*], *ever, always*.
- ever-mo**: adv., *continually, for ever*.
- expounden**: vb. t. [O.F. *espondre*, < L. *exponere*], *to explain*, 1716.

F

- fader**: sb. [O.E. *fæder*], *father*.
- faillen**: vb. infin. [A.F. *failir*, L. L. *fallire*, for L. *fallere*], *fail*.
- fallen**: vb. infin. pr. s. *falles*; pret. s. *fil*, 1866; [O.E. *feallan*, pret. s. *feoll*], *to fall*.
- fare**: vb. infin. pr. s. *fare*, *am*, 1676; [O.E. *faran*], *to go, proceed*.
- faste**: adv. [O.E. *fæst*], *closely, tight; fast, quickly*.
- fecchen**: vb. [O.E. *fecce*, pr. s. of *feccan* (for *fetian*)], *to fetch*.
- felawe**: sb. [Icel. *fē-lag-i* = partner in common property, *fē* (= O.E. *feoh*), property + *lag*, a laying together, society], *fellow, companion*.

- fer**: adv. [O.E. *feor*], *far*.
- ferther**: adj. [O.E. *furðor*], *further*.
- fil**: see *fallen*.
- fleshly**: adv. [O.E. *flæsc-lic*], *carnally*.
- flour**: sb. [A.F. *flur*, L. *flor-em*], *flower*.
- folk**: sb. [O.E. *folc*], *folk, people*.
- folwen**: vb. t. and infin. pres. part. *folwing*, 1770; [O.E. *folgian*], *to follow*.
- foo**: sb. [O.E. *fā(h)*], *foe, enemy*.
- for to**: with infin. = *in order to*.
- forby**: adv., *by, past*.
- forgat**: see *foryeten*.
- forleten**: vb. t. [O.E. *for + lātan*], *abandon, yield up*.
- forsaken**: vb. t. [O.E. *for-sacan*], *leave*.
- forth**: adv. [O.E. *forð*], *forth, away*.
- foryeten**: vb. t. pret. s. *forgat*; [O.E. *forgietan*], *to forget*.
- fraynen**: vb. [O.E. *frignan*, Icel. *fregna*], *to ask, beseech*.
- free**: adj. [O.E. *frēo*], *free, noble, generous*.
- fro**: prep. [O.E. *fram*, Icel. *fra*], *from*.
- ful**: adv. [O.E. *full*], *fully, very*.

G

- gan**: see *ginnen*.
- gemme**: sb. [O.F. *gemme* < L. *gemma*], *gem, jewel*.
- gentil**: adj. [O.F. *gentil* < L. *gentilis*, of a clan], *worthy*.

geten: vb. t. 3 pr. s. getest, [O.E. gytan, Icel. geta], *obtain, get*.

ginnen: vb. t. infin. pret. s. gan; as aux. vb. = *did*; [O.E. -ginnan, pret. -gān, pp. gunnen], *to begin*.

gladly: adv. [O.E. glæd-līce], *willingly*.

gon: vb. infin. 2 pr. s. goost; 3 pr. s. goth; pr. pl. goon; [O.E. gān], *to go, proceed*.

goost: see **gon**, above.

goost: sb. [O.E. gāst], *spirit, ghost*; the Goost, *the Holy Spirit*, 1660.

grammeere: sb. [F. grammaire, L. L. grammāria, < L. L. gramma, Gk. γράμμα, a letter, γράφειν, to write], *grammar*, 1726.

greet: adj. [O.E. grēat], *great*.

greve: vb. t. [A.F. grever, to burden < L. grevare], *to grieve, vex*.

greyn: sb. [O.F. grein, grain < L. granum], *grain, corn*.

gruf: adv. [cp. Icel. á grúfu, on one's face, face downwards, < grúfa, to cower], *on his face*, 1865.

gyden: vb. t. imper. s. gydeth, 1677; [O.F. guider], *to guide, direct*.

H

halsien: vb. t. 1 pr. s. halse, 1835; [O.E. healsian = to clasp round the neck, hence to beseech, supplicate], *conjure*.

han: vb. t. 1 pr. pl. han; 1 pret. s. hadde; [O.E. habban], *to have, possess*.

hangen: vb. t. infin. pret. s. heng; [O.E. hangian], *to hang*.

he: pron. dat. and acc. him; pl. dat. and acc. hem (*them*); *he*.

heeld: see **holden**.

heep: sb. [O.E. heap, cp. O.H.G. houf], *crowd, host*.

heer: adv., *here*.

heeren: vb. t. pret. s. herde; pp. herd; [O.E. hīeran, O.S. hōrian], *to hear*.

hem: see **he**.

henten: vb. t. pret. s. hente [O.E. hentan], *to seize, catch hold of*.

herien: vb. t. [O.E. herian, Goth. haz-jan], *to praise*.

heriynge: verbal noun, *praise*, 1649; see **herien**.

herknen: vb. t. infin. pret. s. herkned; [O.E. hearenian], *listen*.

herte: sb. [O.E. heorte], *heart*.

heven: sb. [O.E. heofon], *heaven*.

hir: pron. dat. and acc., *to her, her*.

hir: poss. adj., *her*.

hir: poss. adj., *their*.

holden: vb. t. 3 pret. s. heeld; [O.E. healdan], *to hold*.

homicide: sb. [O.F. homicide, L. homicidium (Vulgate)], *manslayer*.

honest: adj. [O.F. honeste, L. honestum], *honourable, worthy*, 1751.

hooly: adj. [O.E. hālig], *holy*.

hors: sb. [O.E. hors, neut. noun with pl. hors; Icel. hross], *horse*, pl. in 1823.

humblesse: sb. [humble, A.F. humble, humile, L. humilem], *humidity*.

humylitee: sb. [A.F. humilité, L. humilitatem], *humidity*.

hyren: vb. t. [O.E. hýran], *hire*.

I

in: sb. [O.E. inn], *house, inn*.

in: prep. [O.E. in], *in*.

in-with: prep. [O.E. in-wið], *within, in*.

J

jape: sb. [from O.F. japer = to yelp], *jest, trick*.

Jewerye: sb. [from A.F. Juierie, L. Judæum], *Jewry, Jews' quarter*.

K

kan: see *kennen*.

kerve: vb. t. pp. korven [O.E. ceorfan, pret. clearf, pp. corfen], *to carve, cut*.

kitte: see *kutten*.

knowe: vb. t. infin. pret. pl. knewe, [O.E. cnāwan, pret. cnēow], *to know*.

knowes: sb. pl. [O.E. cnēow, pl. cnēow; cog. L. genu], *knees*.

kennen, kunnen: vb. t. infin. pr. s. kan; pl. konne; pret. koude; [O.E. cunnan], *to know, be able*.

koude: see *kennen*.

kynde: sb. [O.E. cynd], *nature*; as by wey of kynde, *in the ordinary course of nature*, 1840.

kynde: adj. [O.E. cynde], *kind*.

L

langage: sb. [A.F. langage], *language*.

large, adj. [O.F. large, < L. largus], *wide, large*.

last: sb. pl. [O.E. hlæst, a burden], *loads, burdens*, 1628.

laste: adv., *last*.

lasten: vb. infin. pret. s. laste [O.E. læstan, Goth. laistjan, from laists (O.E. last), a foot-track], *to last, endure*.

lat: see *leten*.

laude: sb. [L. laudem], *praise, honour*.

lawe: sb. [O.E. lagu, Icel. lag, lög; cp. L. legem], *law*.

leet: see *leten*.

leren: vb. t. infin. [O.E. lærان], *to learn*.

lernen: vb. t. infin. [O.E. leornian], *to learn*.

lest: pr. s. impers. (*it*) *pleases*; [O.E. lystan, to choose], 1752.

leten: vb. pr. s. let; pret. s. leet; leet binde, *caused to be bound*, 1810; imper. pl. lat, 1633; [O.E. lætan], *to let, cause (to be)*.

leve: sb. [O.E. leaf], *leave, permission*.

leven: vb. t. [O.E. liefan], *to allow; God leve, God grant*, 1873.

leyen : vb. t. pret. s. leyde ; pp. leyd ; [O.E. lecgan, pret. legde, pp. gelegd, Icel. leggja], *to lay*.

lighte : vb. t. pret. s. lighte, *illuminated, enlightened*, 1661, [O.E. lihtan], *to make light*.

litel : adj. [O.E. lítel], *small, little*.

longe : adv. *long, for a long time*.

loude, adv. [O.E. hlúde], *loudly*.

loven : vb. t. [O.E. lofian], *to praise*, 1847.

lucre : sb. [F. lucre, L. lucrum], *lucre, gain* ; lucre of villanyie = *vile gain*, 1681.

lye : vb. infin. pr. s. lyth, pret. s. lay [O.E. liegan], *to lie, remain*.

lyf : sb. [O.E. líf], *life*.

lyklihed : sb. [O.E. (ge)líc and O.E. hād], *likelihood*.

M

maister : sb. [O.F. maistre < L. magistrum], *master*.

maistow : *mayest thou*, 1770.

make : vb. t. pret. s. maked [O.E. macian], *to make; compose, write*, 1722.

man : sb. [O.E. man] ; gen. s. mannes, 1630 ; *man*.

manere : sb. [O.F. manière < L.L. maneria < L. manus], *manner, kind, sort* (used without a preposition following), e.g. maner, doctrine, 1689.

marbul : sb. [F. marbre, L. marmorem], *marble*.

martir : sb. [A.F. martir ; Church L. martyr ; Gk. μάρτυς, *martyr*].

mateere, sb. [L. materia, O.F. matere], *matter*.

mayde : sb. [O.E. mægð], *maid-en, virgin*.

meke : adj. [not in O.E., Icel. mjukr], *meek, mild*.

men : pl. of man, *q.v.* ; also a weakened form of man, in the sense of “one” (F. “on”), 1689.

merciable : adj. [O.F. merciable, from merci ; L. mercedem], *merciful*.

mercy : sb. *mercy* ; see **merciable**.

merveillous : adj. [O.F. merveillos ; O.F. merveille < L. mirabilia], *wonderful*.

mete : vb. t. [O.E. mētan], *to meet, to meet together*, 1873.

monk : sb. [O.E. munuc ; L. monachus ; Gk. μοναχός, *solitary*], *monk*.

mooder : sb. [O.E. mōdor], *mother*.

moot, moote, mote, moste : pr. s. mooten, pret. moste, muste [O.E. 1 and 3 pr. s. mōt, 2 pr. s. mōst, pl. mōton, pret. mōste], *may, must, ought*.

mordre : sb. [O.E. morðor], *murder*, 4242.

more : adv. [O.E. māra], *more*.

murye : adj. [O.E. myrig ; murye represents the Southern, and myrie the Northern forms of the word. Our form *merry* is Kentish. The word itself seems to be Celtic], *merry*.

mynde: sb. [O.E. (ge)mynd; cp. O.H.G. gimunt, *memory*], *remembrance*; in *mynde*, *in remembrance*, 1642.

N

- na**: [O.E. nā = ne + ā], *no*.
- namely**: adv. [O.E. nama + lice], *especially*.
- nat**: adv. [O.E. nawiht (= ne + awiht)], *not*.
- nay**: adv. [Icel. nei], *no*.
- ne**: adv. and conj. [O.E. ne = not, nor], *not, nor*; when used ith a verb, a second negative is often added, 1173.
- nekke boon**: [O.E. hnecca + ban], *neck-bone*.
- ner**: adv. comp. [O.E. nēar, comp. of nēah, nigh], *nearer*; *ner and ner*, 1710.
- nest**: sb. [O.E. nest, cp. L. nidus (for nisdus)], *nest*.
- new**: adj. [O.E. niwe], *new, fresh*.
- nexte**: adj. superl. [O.E. superl. nīehsta], *nearest, next*.
- night**: sb. [O.E. niht, Goth. nahts; cp. L. noctem], *night*.
- noght**: adv. [*see nat*], *not, by no means*.
- nolde**: pret. [O.E. nolde, pret. of nyllan = ne willan], *would not*, 1821.
- noote**: sb. [L. nota], *note* (in music), 1711.
- notable**: adj. [O.F. notable; L. notabilem], *remarkable, notorious*.

O

- observe**: vb. t. [O.F. observer, L. observare], *give countenance to, favour*, 1821.
- of**: prep. and adv. [O.E. of], *off*; of a purpos, *deliberately*.
- ofte**: adj. pl. [O.E. oft, Icel. oft, opt], *many*; ofte sythes, *many times, oftentimes*; often tyme, *often*, 1719.
- ought**: sb. [O.E. āwiht], *aught, anything*; as adv. = *ought, at all*, 1792.
- old**: adj. [O.E. eald], *old*.
- oon**: num. adj. [O.E. ān], *one*; ever in oon, *always in the same manner*, 1770.
- oonly**: adv. [O.E. ān + lice], *only*.
- oure**: poss. adj. [O.E. ūre], *of us, our*.
- out**: adv. [O.E. ūt], *out*; used for *come out* in mordre wol out, 1706.
- owen**: vb. t. pret. *oghte, ought* [O.E. āgan], *owe*.

P

- pace**: vb. t. infin. [O.F. passer], *to go, pass*.
- parfournen**: vb. t. [A.F. parfournir], *to perform*.
- passen**: *see pace*.
- pavement**: sb. [A.F. pavement, L. pavimentum], *pavement*.
- peple**: sb. [F. peuple, L. populus], *people*.
- percen**: vb. t. [A.F. percer < O.F. percher < L.L. particare, to part], *to pierce*.

pitously: adv. [adv. of adj. pitous, < O.F. *piteus* < L.L. *pietosus*: “pity” and “piety” once meant the same thing], *piteously*.

plat: adv. [O.F. *plat*; cp. Gk. *πλατύς*, broad], *flat*, 1865.

povre: adj. [O.F. *povre* < L. *pauper*, become Mn.E. *pauper*], *poor*.

precious: adj. [O.F. *precius*, L. *pretiosum*], *precious*.

preyen: vb. infin. [O.F. *preier* (F. *prier*), L. *precare*], *to beseech, pray*.

preyere: sb. [O.F. *preiere*, Church L. *precaria*], *prayer*.

privēe: adj. [F. *privé*, L. *privatus*], *secret, private*.

prively: adv., *secretly*; see above.

prologue: sb. [Gk. *πρόλογος*], *prologue*.

provost: sb. [O.E. *prafost*, < L. *præpositus*, F. *prévot*], *chief magistrate*.

prymer: sb. [L. *primarium*], *primer*.

Q

quade: adj. [Du. *kwaad*, bad, evil; O.Du. *quad*], *bad*, 1628.

quethen: vb. infin. [O.E. *cweðan*, pret. *cwæð* (pl. *cwæðon*), pp. *gecweden*], *to speak, say*.

quod: pret. of quethen, q.v.

R

ravishen: vb. t. pret. *ravysedest* [A.F. *ravir*, pr. p. *ravissant*; L.L. *rapire*, L. *rapere*].

ravysedest: pret. of *ravishen*, q.v.; *didst draw down*, 1659.

reden: vb. t. infin. [O.E. *rādan*], *to read*.

remembre: vb. t. infin. [A.F. *remembrer*, L. *memorare*], *to remember*.

reverence: sb. [L. *reverentia*], *respect*; thy reverence, *the respect shown to thee*, 1663, 1880.

reyn: sb. [O.E. *regen*, Goth. *rign*], *rain*.

rote: sb. [Icel. *rōt*; cp. L. *radix*], *root, source*, 1655.

rote: sb. [O.F. *rote* (Mod. F. *route*), way, beaten track], in the phrase by rote, *by heart*, 1712.

route: sb. [F. *route* < L. *rupta*, a company in broken ranks, < *rumpere*, to break], *company, troop, band*.

ruby: sb. [F. *rubis*, L. *rubens*, red], *ruby*.

ryden: vb. infin. [O.E. *rīdan*], *to ride*.

ryngen: vb. t. infin. [O.E. *rin-gan*], *ring, resound*.

rysen: vb. infin. [O.E. *risan*], *to rise*.

S

saille: vb. infin. [O.E. *seglian*], *to sail*.

salte: adj. [O.E. *sealt*], *salt*.

salue: vb. t. [O.F. *saluer*; L. *salutare*], *to salute, greet*.

sapience: sb. [O.F. *sapience*; L. *sapientia*], *wisdom*.

saugh: pret. of *see*, q.v.

sayde: see *seyen*.

science: sb. [O.F. science; L. *scientia*], *learning, learned writing*, 1666.

scole: sb. [O.E. *scolu* < L. *schola*, Gr. *σκολη*], *school*.

scoleward: adv. = *towards school*.

se, see, seen: vb. t. pret. *saugh*, pp. *seyn* [O.E. *sēon*, pret. *seah*, pret. pl. *sāwon*]. *to see*, 1695, 1863, etc.

seint: sb. [F. saint, L. *sanctus*], *saint*.

seken: vb. t. [O.E. *sēcan*], *to seek*.

sely: adj. [O.E. *sālig*], *good, innocent, simple*, 1702.

seminge: sb. [< O.E. *sēman*, to seem], *appearance; to my seminge, as it seems to me*, 1838.

sentence: sb. [A.F. *sentence*, L. *sententia*], *subject, doctrine*, 1753.

sette(n): vb. t. pp. *set* [O.E. *settan*, pp. *geset(t)*], *to set, place*.

seye, seyen, seyn: vb. t. pret. *sayde*, pp. *seyd* [O.E. *seogan*, pret. *sāde*, pp. *gesād*], *to say*.

shal: 1 and 3 pr. s. ; *shalt*, 2 pr. s. ; *sholde*, pret. [O.E. 1 and 3 pr. s. *soeal*, 2 pr. s. *scealt*, pret. *scolde*, *to have to, be sure to*], *shall, etc.*

shenden, vb. t. pp. *shent* [O.E. *scendan*], *to harm, scold*, 1731.

shipman: sb. [O.E. *scipman*, a *sailor*; cp. Du. *skipper*, a *skipper*], *sailor*.

singen: vb. t. infin. pret. *song*, pp. *songe*, [O.E. *singan*], *to sing*.

sith, conj. [O.E. *sið*], *since; sith that = since*, 1838.

sitten: vb. infin. [O.E. *sittan*], *to sit*.

slee, sleen: vb. t. pret. *slow*, pp. *slayn* [O.E. *slēan*, pret. *slōh*, pp. *slægen, slegen*], *to slay*, 1874.

smal: adj. [O.E. *smæl*], *small, little*.

so: adv. [O.E. *swā*], *so*.

so: conj. [O.E. *swā*], *provided that; so that, provided that*, 1638.

socours: sb. [A.F. *sucur*, O.F. *socors*; L.L. *succursus*], *help, aid*.

somtyme: adv. [O.E. *sum + tīma*], *sometimes*.

sone: sb. [O.E. *sunu, son*].

sone: adv. [O.E. *sōna*], *quickly, speedily, soon*.

song(e): see *singen*.

soude: vb. t. pp. *souded* [O.F. *souder*, Ital. *soldare*, L. *solidare*], *to confirm, strengthen, weld*, 1769.

soule: sb. [O.E. *sāwol*], *soul*.

spak: see *speke*.

sped: pp. refl. of *spede*, q.v.

spede: vb. infin. [O.E. *spēdan*], *to go, speed*; han *sped hem, made haste*, 1828.

speke: vb. t. infin. pret. *spak* [O.E. *sprecan*, late *specan*], *to speak*.

sprede: vb. t. [O.E. *sprādan*; Du. *spreiden*], *to spread*.

spreynd : see **springen**.

springen : vb. t. pp. spreynd [O.E. sprengan], *to sprinkle*.

stant : see **standen**.

sterve(n) : vb. infin. [O.E. steor-fan], *to die*.

stille : adv. [O.E. stille], *quietly*.

stinte(n) : vb. infin. [O.E. styn-tan], *to stop, cease*, 1747.

stonden : vb. infin. pr. s. stant, pret. stood [O.E. standan], *to stand*.

strete : sb. [O.E. strāt; O.S. strata; L. strata (via)], *street, way*.

sustene : vb. t. [A.F. sustener, O.F. sostenir; L. sustinēre], *support, maintain*.

swal : see **swellen**.

swellen : vb. infin. pr. s. swelle, pret. s. swal [O.E. swellan, pret. sweall, pp. swollen], *to swell*; up swal, *was puffed up with anger*, 1750.

swete : adj. [O.E. swēte], *sweet*.

swetnesse : sb. *sweetness*.

swich : adj. [O.E. swylce], *such*.

swoune, swowne : vb. infin [O.E. swōgan = to sound like the wind, sigh], *to faint, swoon*.

T

taken : vb. t. pret. pl. tooken [Icel. taka], *to take*.

tale : sb. [O.E. talu], *tale, story*.

taryinge : sb [verbal sb. from tarien, < O.E. tergan], *tarrying, delay*.

techen : vb. t. pret. taughte, pp. taught [O.E. tēcan, pret.

tæhte, pp. getæht], *to instruct, teach*.

tellen : vb. t. [O.E. tellan], *to tell*.

terē : sb. [O.E. tēar, also teagor; cp. Gr. δικρυ], *tear*.

thanne : adv. [O.E. ðænne, ðonne], *then*.

that : demons. pron. and def. art. [O.E. ðæt, neut. of the def. art.], *that, the*.

thennes forth : adv., *thenceforth*.

thereto : adv. [O.E. þærto], *b-sides, moreover*, 1757.

thilke : adj. [the + ilk = O.E. se + ilca, same], *that, that same*.

thing : sb. [O.E. þing], *thing*.

thinken : vb. infin. pret. thoughte, 1852 [O.E. þyncan, pret. þuhte, pp. geþuht], *to appear, seem*; me thoughte, *it seemed to me*.

thoght : sb. [O.E. geþoht, properly pp. of þencan, to think; Icel. þotti; cp. G. gedacht, pp. of denken], *care, anxiety*, 1779, 1794.

thonour : = the honour, sb. [A.F. hunur, L. honorem], *the honour*.

thoughte : see **thinken**.

thries : adv. [O.E. ðriwa = thrice; the termination is due to analogy with O.E. ānes (= once)], *thrice*.

throte : sb. [O.E. þrotu; cp. O.H.G. drozza], *throat*.

throwen : vb. t. pret. pl. threwe, 1762 [O.E. þrāwan, to twist, whirl], *to throw*.

thurgh: prep. [O.E. þurh], *through*.

thurghout: prep. [O.E. þurh + út], *throughout*.

thymage: = the ymage, sb. [O.F. image, L. imago], *image*, 1695.

til: conj. [Icel. til, to], *until*.

tomb: sb. [O.F. tombe, L. tumba], *tomb*.

tonge: sb. [O.E. tunge; cogn. with O.L. dingua, L. lingua], *tongue*.

tooken: see *taken*.

torment: sb. [A.F. torment, a tempest; L. tormentum], *torment, suffering*.

trikled: vb. pp., *trickled*.

twelf: num. adj. [O.E. twelf], *twelve*.

twelfmonth: sb. [O.E. twelf + monað], *twelvemonth*.

twies: adv. [O.E. twiwa; the termination is due to analogy with O.E. anes (= once); cp. thries, *above*], *twice*.

tyma: sb. [O.E. tima], *time*.

U

unbrent: pp. = *unburnt*, 1658; from brennen (pp. brent), q.v.

unnethe: adv. [un + ēaðe (easily)], *scarcely, with difficulty*; with an adverbial -s, 1675, *scarcely*.

unstable: adj. [un + F. stable: < L. stabilis; from stare, to stand], *unstable, weak*, 1877.

upright: adv. [O.E. up + rihte (adv.), < adj. riht; op. Icel.

rettr, op. L. rectus], *reversed, lying on one's back* (mostly of people asleep or dead), 1801.

usage: sb. [A.F. usage], *custom, habit*; hadde in usage, was accustomed, 1696; was in usage, 1717, *was used*.

usure: sb. [A.F. usure, L. usura], *usury*.

V

verraily: adv. [A.F. verrai, L.L. veracum, L. verus], *truly*.

vers: sb. [O.F. vers, < L. versus], *verse, stanza*.

vertu: sb. [O.F. vertu, virtud, L. virtutem], *virtue, power*, 1661.

vileynye: sb. [A.F. vilanie; villain = a peasant, villainous; L.L. villanus = a farm servant; L. villa = a farmstead, country-house], *vile conduct*, 1681; original sense was *vulgarity*.

W

wardrobe: sb. [F. garde-robe], *privy*.

ware: adj. [O.E. wær], *aware*; beth ware, *beware*, 1629.

waspes: sb. gen. s. [O.E. wæps, L. vespa], *wasp's*, 1749.

wel: adv. *well*.

wenden: vb. infin., pret. wente, pp. went [O.E. wendan, pret. wende], *to go*; been went, *are gone*, 1869.

went: see *wenden*.

wepen : vb. infin. [O.E. wēpan], *to weep*.
were : pret. s. [O.E. wāre], *were, would be*, 1640.
werken : vb. inf. pret. wroghte [O.E. wyrcan, pret. worhte], *work, contrive*.
weye : sb. [O.E. weg], *a way*.
whan : adv. [O.E. hwanne], *when*.
whyle : sb. [O.E. hwil], *time*.
widwe, wydwe : sb. [O.E. wydwe], *a widow*.
wilde : adj. [O.E. wild], *wild, untamed*.
wille, wol : 1 and 3 pers. s. pr. ; 2 pers., 1641 ; pret. wolde [O.E. wille, 1 and 3 pers. sing. pr. ; wolde, pret.], *will; woldest thou, wouldest thou*.
wist(e) : see *witen*.
witen, wyten : vb. t., 1 and 3 pers. s. pr. wot, woot ; 2 pers. s. pr. wost ; pret. wiste, 1820 [O.E. witan, 1 and 3 pers. s. pr. wat, 2 pers. s. wast, pret. wiste], *to know*.

withouten : prep. *besides*, 1807.
wol, wolde : see *wille*.
wondre : vb. infin. [O.E. wundrian, Icel. undra], *to wonder*.
word : sb. [O.E. word], *word*.
worship : sb. [O.E. weorðscipe], *honour, worship*, 1844.
wroghte : see *werken*.
wyf : sb. [O.E. wīf], *wife* ; gen. sb. wyves, *wife's*, 1631.

Y

y- : sign of pp. = O.E. ge-, G. ge- ; cp. y-bounde, 1866, y-comen, 1687 ; etc.
yaf : see *yeven*.
ye : adv. [O.E. gē], *yea, verily*.
yeven : vb. t. pret. yaf, 1794 [O.E. giefan, pret. geaf], *to give*.
y-take : pp. of taken, *q.v.*
y-taught : pp. of techen, *q.v.*
yvel : adj. [O.E. yfel], *evil, ill*.
ywis : adv. [O.E. gewiss], *certainly*.

